

ALTERNITY

ISSUE 2

LAST RESORT

ALTERNITY ROLEPLAYING FAN MAGAZINE



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The *Last Resort*'s color scheme references the major published campaign settings for Alternity.

- General Alternity
- Star Drive
- Dark Matter
- Gamma World

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Editorial: D20 or Not D20

I actually looked forward to the release of Third Edition Dungeons and Dragons, even after playing and then dedicating myself to the spread of the Alternity system (Best Damn Game System This Side of the Universe). I had started my roleplaying journey with Advanced Dungeons and Dragons and still had fond memories of the game. I was curious to see what was changed around and whether or not it was an improvement. I purchased the *Player's Guide*, *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *Monster Manual* and spent some time absorbing the information. Now my confession...

I thought it was a big improvement over the old system. (Duck and cover)

I stand by that opinion because it fixed a lot of things that bugged me about the old game. I applauded the standard dice mechanic and I rejoiced at the death of THACO, something I had long abandoned in my own campaign. The prestige class was a novel idea and the new multiclass system was greatly needed. I was happy to see the old dog get revitalized and even considered starting up a D&D campaign. I had my homemade setting ready to go and I just needed to convert over to D20. Before I went too far I sat and reflected. Sure, I thought 3E was a good restructuring of the granddaddy of all RPGs. I thought it was superior to the older editions. But why drive a new Saturn when you have a high performance Porsche in the driveway?

I couldn't bring myself back to the world of ever-escalating hit points, nonabsorbing armor, and straightjacket level systems. I loved mortal damage, the clank of a sword on chainmail, and the true customization of all character skills. Alternity had everything I needed for the kind of game I wanted to gamemaster. Bah on Critical Hits and its flimsy multiplying trickery! I had Amazing hits with nasty Mortals to scare my players with. If I ever revitalized my fantasy setting it would be fitted with the RPG powerhouse that is Alternity.

Now I go to the bookstores and look at the latest D20 books and smirk. There are variations on the hit point system and there are rules that attempt to simulate the reality of handguns and weaponry but they all fall short of Alternity. The Alternity system just has that special something that blends cinematic with reality to provide a great gaming experience. If you were to ask me what that special something is I would give you the 4 Ms:

1. MORTALS: Alternity has the perfect durability system. A sword can actually cause death with one strike. A person can actually be "mortally wounded" with a sword. The wonder of it all. Death by one little sword strike. And guns can kill you one shot too. Weird, huh?
2. MOGA (Marginal/Ordinary/Good/Amazing): What can I say? I love variable success results. Nothing is better than laughing wickedly and yelling "Amazing Hit" when my cyber hate demon is firing a mass rifle at some cocky player who doesn't have the good sense to duck behind a wall.
3. MAD SKILLS: A player can acquire skills and get better at whatever they want without being restricted by class. My brainiac scientist might be a genius at genetic manipulation but he is also a crack shot with a handgun. Tech Op does not equal combat incompetent. Sure I could jump around with multiclass options but that would be like buying a static skill package every level.
4. MAGNIFICENT MECHANICS: Now this is what I call a dice system. Sometimes I sit and wonder at the beauty of the Situation Die, elegantly shifting back and forth between positive and negative. No unwieldy numbers to add. No large handfuls of dice to roll.

I could go on but I don't have two pages to continue my little rant. Let's just say I can't bring myself to discard the genius of Alternity for a less satisfying product. Sorry D20. I might play you if the opportunity arises but when I gamemaster, make mine Alternity.

Later, true believers.

Daryl Blasi, Executive Editor

Note: I apologize for the use of the term "Mad Skills". I am neither young nor hip enough to use this slang authentically. I just needed another "M". Peace out, dawgs.

Submissions

The Last Resort is accepting any Alternity-related articles for publication. We will also accept general roleplaying articles that can be used for the Alternity game.

Authors may wish to submit applicable articles to regular or semi-regular columns. The following is a list of the current columns:

Action Emporium: arms, armor and equipment

Bestiary Bizarre: creatures for Gamma World setting

Cyber Shop: robotics and cybernetics

Domain Virtua: detailed grid site

Foes Fantastic: creatures for arcane Alternity

Grid Run: computers and gridrunning

Home Rule Advantage: home rules for Alternity

Legion: heroes, villains, and SCMs

Mind's Eye: psionics

Special FX: super powers and magic

Species Catalogue: alien species for Alternity

Sword and Staff: arcane Alternity

Tavern Tales: game fiction

Tangents: alternate worlds

Veritas Omnes Liberant: conspiracies for Dark Matter setting

Xenohunter's Field Guide: xenofoms for Dark Matter setting

Note: Cook's Guide is written every issue by Matthew R. Esch under the pseudonym of Montgomery Cook IX. We will accept other correspondents who want to cover the Star Drive universe and either incorporate the article into Cook's Guide or format it as a stand alone article, whatever the author's preference.

If you have an idea for a new regular column feel free to email us at lastresortmail@yahoo.com

Article Guidelines

1. Word or text is the preferred format for submission of articles. Other formats will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
2. Excel files can be submitted for tables used in the article.
3. Indicate within the text what sections need to be sidebars and where pictures (if applicable) need to be placed in relation to the text. Requests for pictures from staff artists may also be made if you do not provide your own.
4. Do not place pictures in article file. Send them as separate files.
5. The title and author's name must be placed on the first line of the article to insure proper credit is given.
6. Email Word/text file to lastresortmail@yahoo.com

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2. Send title and/or captions (if applicable) for the piece, as well as artist name to insure proper credit.
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We will set you up as Last Resort staff so you may upload picture directly to the group site.

NANOTECHNOLOGY RULES

by James Nostack

Explanation and Overview.

Though I presume every sci-fi roleplayer is familiar with the idea, nanotechnology refers to a futuristic form of manufacturing. Extremely tiny robots interact with individual atoms and place them in fantastically precise patterns. This means you could create a gear the size of a molecule, or write the entire *Encyclopedia Britannica* on the head of a pin. In more practical terms this allows you to create programmable matter that can be applied in many nifty ways. Mature nanotechnology would look very similar to magic if you didn't know what was going on.

This file presents nanotech from several different angles, and it might make sense to examine it gradually, rather than all at once. In the first section you will find a new specialty skill, new career paths, and a new flaw appropriate to settings with molecular manufacturing.

Next I have presented some simple nanotech equipment, from trivial applications like living toothpaste to very sophisticat-

ed systems like the bush robot, which manufactures swarms of nanites for industrial purposes. The most important of these gadgets is the universal assembler: when properly programmed, it can build most macrotech items.

Although nanites inside the human body are technically cybergear, I have treated them as pseudo-mutations to reflect the fact that nanites behave like intelligent cells. Most of these "nanomod" are not permanent.

A cloud of nanites, also known as a "cyberswarm," can be designed for many different tasks, from guard duty to gardening. While conventional attacks don't work very well against them, cyberswarms can be damaged in a variety of other ways, and most move very slowly. Rather than an ultimate weapon, cyberswarms occupy a very specific tactical niche.

A discussion of progress levels, existing campaign settings, and other versions of nanotech rules occurs at the end of this document.

The Basics

Nanotech

New Physical Science skill

Cost: 5

Profession: Tech Op

Nanotechnology falls under the Physical Science broad skill, but it's maddeningly interdisciplinary. A nanotechnologist must be adept at organic chemistry, engineering, computer programming, genetics, and ecology; for this reason it costs 5 skill points (4 for Tech Ops). The *nanotech* skill permits the design, manufacture, instruction, and troubleshooting of nanobot systems.

Like the *genetics* specialty skill, all nanotech analysis requires sophisticated CAD-CAM software; you can't do this stuff with a paper and pencil. Using a nanotech gauntlet to simplify the design process provides a -1 step bonus; having a bush robot to do the manufacturing gives a further -2 step improvement.

⊗ **Design Simple Nanotech:** At rank 3, a character can design simple nanotech gadgets, like the kind described in the "Equipment" section. This is usually a task of Marginal or Ordinary complexity.

⊗ **Design Advanced Nanotech:** At rank 6, a character can design cyberswarms or nanomod. This is generally a task of Good or Amazing complexity, depending on the sophistication of the system.

⊗ **Increased Skill:** Like the other specialty skills under Physical Science, this skill becomes easier with greater mastery. The hero gets a -1 step bonuses to the nanotech skill at ranks 3, 6, 9 and 12.

New Careers

Nanotechnologist

These Tech Ops are the masters of the microscopic world. From the board room to the battlefield, nanotech has reconfigured how people live, work, and fight, and a wise group of heroes will want someone who is conversant with these systems. A nanotechnologist reprograms captured cyberswarms, designs new gadgetry for the team, and figures out how to handle the catastrophes created if things ever go wrong.

Signature Skills: Physical Science-*chemistry*, *nanotech 2*, *physics*; Life Science; Computer Science-*programming*. Cost: 35 skill pts.

Signature Equipment: Nanotech gauntlet. One cyberswarm, or one nanomod, of controlled availability or less.

HazMat Specialist.

These Combat Specs go into the nastiest situations imaginable: places where chemical, biological, or nanotech weapons have been, or soon will be, deployed. These heroes fight against, and are sometimes armed with, the dirtiest weapons science can create. Outside of war zones they often participate in urgent clean-up or rescue operations.

Signature Skills: Armor Operation; Heavy Weapons-*indirect fire*; Demolitions-*disarm*; Knowledge-*first aid*. Cost: 25 skill pts.

Signature Equipment: Sentry swarm. Soft e-suit.

New Flaw

Microphobia (2, 4, 6 pts)

A microphobe is frightened by small things—in this case, nanites. This flaw is handled just like a normal phobia (see *PHB*, p108), except it's triggered by the presence, or suspected presence, of nanotech stuff, especially nanomod and cyberswarms.

Equipment

Mostly new equipment, but I've included a few nanotech items from published sources for the sake of completeness.

Acoustic Control Device (ACD):

You can't control nanites with electricity; they're too small for copper wires to work, and they're usually moving around in suspension. Instead they are instructed by broadcasting via high frequency sound waves; the sound waves are too high pitched for humans to hear, but they may be audible to bats or sensitive dogs. Sometimes the ACD itself is built on the nanotech scale if humans aren't meant to interfere, but many other devices (like utility fog) feature an acoustic control device large enough for humans to interact with. An ACD has a range of 10, 100, or 1000 meters, depending on whether the signal transmits through solid objects, liquids, or air.

From a gaming point of view, the ACD offers a way to hack nanites, though clearly this should not be easy (4 successes at least). Even finding the right transmission frequency for a newly encountered swarm might require a *communications* or *cryptography* skill check. The ACD can be jammed using the *Systems Operation-communications* skill and the appropriate hardware.

Brain Scanner: This device resembles a hospital bed, but the functional part is a helmet that secretes nanites into the patient's brain. There they map the neural network and construct a braintape of that individual—sort of a cognitive sculpture of his personality and memories. (A braintape is useful in psychodesign, the futuristic version of psychiatry.)

Scanning a brain is always a complex *medical knowledge* skill check. The task's complexity determines the quality of the braintape: making a Good braintape is a task of Good complexity.

Bullseye Disease: These nanites resemble disease bacteria, but they have been programmed to only attack targets with a pre-selected genotype. You could, for example, design a bullseye disease to attack only people who are left-handed, or even a single person. People who do not

GADGET	PL	AVAILABILITY	COST
Blueprints	7	[as item]	[cost of item]
Acoustic Control Device	6	Common	\$300
Brain Scanner	7	Controlled	\$8000
Bullseye Disease	6	Military or Restricted	Varies
Bush Robot	7	Restricted	\$200K
Goo Stock	6	Common	[cost of item] x1, x5, or x10
Grenade, Flytrap	7	Controlled	\$300
Grenade, Smoke	5	Controlled	\$50
Hive	7	Common	\$500 (external); \$3000 (cyber)
Intelligent Poison	6	Restricted	\$500 per dose
Living Toothpaste	6	Any	\$2 per month
Microbot Surgical Theater	7	Military	\$15K
Nanofluidic Armor	7	Restricted	\$25K
Nanotech Gauntlet	7	Controlled	\$2000
Octopus Knife	7	Military	\$2000
Smart Camo	7	Military	4 times garment price
Transparent Blindfold	6	Controlled	\$500
Universal Assembler	7	Common	\$50K
Video Clothes	6	Any	2, 3, or 4 times garment price 3D

meet the criteria are not infected. Note that the designer must have a genetic sample to work with, and any clones would be affected since they share the same DNA.

In game terms, treat a bullseye disease as a regular disease, but only against the target population. Non-targeted people do not have to worry about it.

Bush Robot: Not an attempt at political satire, but a seriously proposed system of nano-manufacturing. A bush robot has a central trunk that splits into three branches; each of these also splits into three, and so on down to the nanometer scale. In operation the bush robot curls up so that it resembles synthetic tumbleweed, and brings billions of micro-filaments to arrange goo stock into nanites. A bush robot can create one cyberswarm or nanomod per day.

Bush robots are the key to productive nano-manufacturing. As such, they are extremely valuable and are never seen outside of heavily guarded corporate campuses. Their combat statistics are supplied later in this document.

Grenade, Flytrap: A grenade designed to destroy cyberswarms: when

detonated, it emits a gravitational attraction sufficient to swallow a swarm (along with any other microorganisms nearby), but macro-scale objects aren't affected. A gravitic flytrap does 3d4, 2d4, or 1d4 wound points to any cyberswarm within 2, 4, or 6 meters.

Grenade, Smoke: Described on page 183 of the *Players Handbook*, this weapon not only confuses humans, it also scrambles a cyberswarm's internal communications array. It inflicts 2d4 stun points of damage to any cyberswarm in a 6 meter radius.

Hive: A container and power source for a single cyberswarm. It's the size of a 0.33 liter can, and includes an ACD attuned to its swarm. Though normally carried in the hand or on a belt, the hive can be installed as cybergear. This option costs \$3000, takes up 2 "cyber-slots," and requires a nanocomputer.

Intelligent Poison: Nanites are injected into the bloodstream of the host, replicate, and pass through the blood-brain barrier. Then they begin to dismantle the brain. Although this is technically an extremely accelerated disease, treat it as an injected

neurotoxin (*GMG*, page 60), with a +2 penalty due to its severity. The onset time is 30 minutes, and the duration is 5 minutes. Bodily conditions that affect diseases or toxins, such as various mutations or nanomods, can combat intelligent poison.

Living Toothpaste: Not really alive, of course: it's just a bunch of nanites that scrub your teeth and get rid of plaque.

A variant exists which caps your teeth with diamondoid tips: your teeth become as hard as diamond. This lets a character bite for d4 stuns, d4+1 stuns, or d4+2 stuns of unarmed damage. If a character possesses the natural weaponry mutation, diamondoid teeth increase the damage by +1. *Variant availability:* Controlled. *Cost:* \$1000.

Microbot Surgical Theater:

[Taken from the *Star*Drive Arms and Equipment Guide*, pg 19.] This 10 kg briefcase contains an ACD that controls a swarm of medical nanites. These sub-cellular robots pass into the patient's body whereupon they take direction from the surgeon. With each successful *surgery* check, the nanites heal one point of mortal damage, or two points of wound damage (i.e., twice the normal rate). A microbot surgical theater gives a -2 bonus to the *surgery* check assuming the surgeon has attained at least rank 5; those with less experience only get a -1 step bonus.

Nanofluidic Armor (Had'Niltas):

[Taken from the *Star*Drive Arms and Equipment Guide*, pg 79]

Availability: Restricted

Cost: \$25,000

Mass: 12 kg

Composition: Nanofluidics

Environmental Tolerance...

Gravity:	GO-G4
Radiation:	RO-R4
Atmosphere:	AO-A4
Pressure:	PO-P4
Heat:	HO-H4

Action Penalty: +1 penalty

Toughness: Ordinary

Protection: 2d4 vs. Light Impact, d6+1 vs. High Impact, 2d4+1 vs. Energy

Hide: +1

Effective Strength: 15

Developed by the Mechalus, this powered armor is light and flexible, and marks a vast improvement over bulky body tanks. Designed to look like a full-body jumpsuit, the had'niltas contains a thick layer of nanofluids that instantly harden to deflect any attack. It automatically stiffens around low-velocity attacks, and can easily dissipate energy discharges. Since this armor would make criminals or enemy soldiers almost unstoppable, it is severely restricted by the Mechalus military. It only sees action in the most savage engagements.

Nanotech Gauntlet: A professional computer gauntlet for nanotechnologists. This one includes a vacuum tank near the wrist, and inside the sealed environment microfilaments, like those of a bush robot, can study nanotech systems. Atomic force microscopes provide a display for working with such tiny stuff. Like other professional gauntlets, it confers a -1 step bonus to the *nanotech* skill.

Octopus Knife (Nanotech Powered Melee Weapon):

Skill: Melee-powered

Accuracy: 0

Range: Personal

Type: Light impact (ordinary)

Damage: d6w, d6+2w, d6m

Actions: 2

Payload: Robotic knife edge

Clip Size: 10 uses

Clip Cost: \$500

Hide: +3

Mass: 1

Availability: Military

Cost: \$2000

This is a nanotech melee weapon used by the Mechalus. The razor-sharp blade, only one molecule thick on its leading edge, is actually composed of "liquid steel." When you stab someone with an octopus knife, the blade expands into a gruesome grappling hook of whirling, razor-sharp tendrils, robotically rips itself out along with several vital organs, and then resumes its original shape, ready for another attack.

Smart Camo: The equivalent of stealth weave (*Star*Drive Arms & Equipment Guide*, pg 9), this stuff changes its color to match the surroundings. It provides a -2 step bonus to Stealth checks, and a +1 improvement in the wearer's Dexterity resistance modifier. If deposited suddenly in a radically new environment, the camo rapidly shifts through a kaleidoscope until it finds a match; this reverses the modifiers for one full round (+2 to Stealth, -1 to Dex mod). Smart camo quadruples the cost of a garment.

Transparent Blindfold: A variant on video cloth, this blindfold can turn transparent when commanded by an authorized security computer or voice pattern; it can generate white noise into a character's ears, which neutralizes the sense of hearing should the operator desire. Third party observers have a +2 penalty to notice the blindfold, since it looks transparent to them. The blindfold has no visible seam or knot; it forces a +1 penalty to *security devices* checks to remove it without authorization.

Video Clothes: Nanoweave can change the color and cut of any garment. Rather than buying a new dress when the old one goes out of style, you can keep the same dress and simply download a new pattern. Video clothes are continuously self-cleaning and do not need to be laundered. Video clothes cost about twice as much as a "dumb" equivalent. [Please note that most of the special weaves listed on page 9 of the *Star*Drive Arms and Equipment Guide*—anti-scan weave, climate weave, etc.—can actually be better justified through nanotechnology.]

Universal Assembler

This appliance, about the size of a clothes dryer, is the key to nano-manufacturing: it can make whatever you want, so long as you give it molecular fuel and sufficiently detailed instructions.

A universal assembler requires 3D blueprints to work. These are data files that specify the exact location of every atom in an object. Due to the massive amount of information, each kilogram requires 1 data slot of storage. Writing a blueprint from scratch requires rank 3 in *nanotech*, and is a task of Amazing complexity with a +3 step modifier.

Because no company wants to drive itself out of business, 3D blueprints are designed to erase themselves once the object gets built—this way you can't buy one set of blueprints and make an infinite number of objects. Of course, illegal gridsites may offer "file-swapping" services.

You must feed a universal assembler with the appropriate goo stock. Goo contains fantastically pure concentrations of chemical elements, pre-arranged into simple structures like gears, helices, or sheets. The assembler plucks out the structure it needs and uses it to build whatever the 3D blueprint specifies.

Goo comes in different "flavors," reflecting its efficiency for certain tasks. Flavors include electronics goo (for computers), protein goo (for food or organic chemicals), and metallo goo (for guns and automobiles). When handling something in its flavor, a universal assembler produces 1 kg per hour, at a cost equal to macrotech; non-optimal items operate at ten times the cost and

price. For example, protein goo could make a gourmet meal in one hour for \$30, but it would take the same goo 10 hours and \$300 to make a computer mouse.

The favorite choice of goo for adventurers is "infini-goo," which handles everything, but not very fast. Infini-goo makes all items at 5 times the time and price. In the above example, it would make the meal, or the mouse, in 5 hours for \$150. It's the best thing to have if you don't know what you're likely to need.

Limitations

- An assembler requires a 3D blueprint of an object to work from; it cannot improvise.
- An assembler can only work from goo stock; it can't use "raw" molecules on site.
- A universal assembler cannot create a live creature, though it could create a corpse.
- An assembler can only make objects from the Fusion Age (PL 6) or earlier.
- An assembler can only make macrotech objects. No living toothpaste or smart camo.

Variant: Municipal Assembler This version is the size of a city block, and meets the manufacturing needs of 50,000 people. A municipal assembler costs \$1B, and therefore is out of the price range of heroic characters, though it may prove very useful in establishing a new colony. Specialized factories, devoted to a particular class of goo stock (i.e., electronics or organic chemicals), come in at a tenth of the cost and size.

Nanomods.

Custom-made nanites enter the host's body and augment normal bodily functions. While they do not re-write the host's DNA, they can mimic certain mutations. Nanomod are not treated like regular cybergear, since they occupy virtually no space inside the body and do not require surgery, but they do require a nanocomputer to coordinate their actions, and take up one slot of active memory. A character can only have one nanomod at any given time.

Each nanomod must be compatible with the host's immune system and genetic structure. In game terms, it requires a simple *genetics* skill check to calibrate it. On any success, the virus works normally, and the host displays her new traits within 1d4 days. If the genetics skill check ends in a failure, the host suffers from an Ordinary disease, or a Good disease on a critical failure. Anything that affects a character's tolerance for disease will come into play. The nanomod will not take hold, even if the hero fights off the disease.

For reasons of ecological safety, the typical nanomod deactivates itself after one week, yet it requires only the addition of some replication software for the nanites to survive indefinitely: a nanomod can be made permanent at 10 times the cost. Permanent nanomod also have a tighter availability by one rank: a military nanomod becomes restricted.

Acceptor Nanomod: Inspired by Mechalus body chemistry, these suppress the immune system's reaction to cybergear. If a check to reject cybergear is made (see *PHB*, pg 241), acceptor nanomod grant a -2 step bonus to keep the gear.

NANOMOD	TEMP AVAILABILITY	TEMP COST
<i>Acceptors</i>	Controlled	\$2000
Adaptation: Hot or Arid	Common	\$1000
Adrenal Control	Military	\$3000
Biorhythm Control	Common	\$1000
Dermal Reinforcement	Military	\$3000
Improved Constitution	Controlled	\$2000
Improved Dexterity	Controlled	\$2000
Improved Strength	Controlled	\$2000
Improved Healing	Controlled	\$2000
Night Vision	Common	\$1000
Toxin Tolerance	Common	\$1000
Vascular Control	Controlled	\$2000
Enhanced Immunity	Controlled	\$2000
Radiation Tolerance	Controlled	\$2000
Hyper Immunity	Military	\$3000
Environmental Sensitivity:		
Hot or Arid	Controlled	\$2000
Slight Reduced Ability:		
Str, Dex, or Con	Military	\$3000
Thermal Intolerance	Military	\$3000
Toxin Intolerance	Controlled	\$2000
Weak Immunity	Military	\$3000
Inefficient Metabolism	Military	\$3000

Cyberswarms.

Cyberswarms are semi-intelligent clouds of nanites, composed of thousands of constituents which range in size between bacteria and bugs. Unlike nanomods, which operate inside the human body, cyberswarms interact with the external world. Combat stats are supplied below.

In order to create a cyberswarm, you must select a chassis and an equipment package. For example, you might want to select an aerial paramedic swarm, or a crawler repair swarm.

Chassis Types

Nanites can fly in the air, crawl on the ground, or lurk amid dust particles. In general, noticing a cyberswarm requires a *perception* check at a +1 penalty, since the members are the size of gnats or smaller. Noticing an individual member of the swarm, for example one that got left behind from the main group, is made at a +3 penalty. Dust mote nanites, because they're so small, increase each these penalties by +2 steps.

Aerial: The nanite is an aerostat, or balloon enclosing a perfect vacuum, combined with a miniature turbine. An aerial cyberswarm can fly at movement rate 6.

Crawler: The nanite resembles a tiny tick. Not only can it cling to surfaces, but since it needn't be lighter than air it can mount a reinforced casing. This thickened armor gives a +1 step resistance modifier to area of effect attacks (grenades, acid, flame, etc.). The crawler has a movement rate of 2 along surfaces, including walls and ceilings.

Dust Mote: The smallest nanite is no bigger than a speck of dust. It is completely immobile, and deployed through an aerosol spray or crop duster. This kind of swarm imposes an additional +2 to all *perception* checks to notice, since it blends in with dust on the ground or in an office. A dust mote nanite, however, suffers a -1 resistance modifier against area of effect attacks (grenades, acid, flame, etc.). A dust mote cannot move; these swarms can only affect what passes through them.

Equipment Packages.

Bug-Hunter: Operates as if it had the *protection protocols* skill (score 12) for

PACKAGE	CHASSIS	AVAILABILITY	COST
Bug-Hunter	Aerial	Controlled	\$3000
Devourer	Any	Restricted	\$10K
Fantasia	Any	Any	\$500
Gardener	Crawler	Any	\$500
House Cleaner	Crawler	Any	\$500
Landscaper	Crawler	Any	\$500
Lightbulb	Any	Any	\$500
Paramedic	Any	Common	\$1000
Repair	Any	Common	\$1000
Sentry	Aerial	Controlled	\$3000
Spy	Dust mote	Controlled or Military	\$3000
Stinger	Any	Military	\$5000
Terraformer	Any	Controlled	\$3000
Utility Fog	Aerial	Controlled	\$5000

the purpose of detecting eavesdropping devices. A bug-hunter swarm can check one square meter per round, and can utterly destroy any spy cyberswarm within one minute if the *protocols* check succeeds.

Devourer: Using mandibles lined with synthetic diamond, a devourer swarm can rip through objects and people. It is the most horrific of all nanotech weapons. A devourer inflicts d4 stuns, d4+2 stuns, d4 wounds, or d4+2 wounds on a Marginal, Ordinary, Good, or Amazing result vs. skill score 12. A devourer swarm is one square meter in area, and therefore can only attack a single target, but may strike every phase. Note that if given enough time, it can eventually destroy objects of Good durability.

Fantasia: These nanites are roughly the size of a small insect, but are built to resemble miniature people, animals, or monsters. They engage in whimsical play, usually in a device rather like an ant farm, with a dance score of 12.

Gardener: Designed to mow lawns, trim branches, and weed flower patches. Can work on one square meter per 5 minutes. Trimming a decent sized branch takes 1 hour; felling a small tree takes 6 hours; felling a large tree takes 24 hours.

House Cleaner: Picks up dust and dirt around the home. Can even clean human skin, though this normally tickles. A swarm can clean one square meter per minute.

Landscaper: The reverse of the house cleaner swarm: these nanites gather dirt and deposit it in programmed patterns, making furrows, terraces, or other terrain improvements. A swarm can make minor changes to one square meter of land in 6 hours; major changes take a full day.

Lightbulb: These nanites produce a chemical reaction like the one found in a firefly's abdomen, and act as a mobile light source of Ordinary intensity. Dust mote versions can be programmed to light up when someone walks through. Lightbulb equipment can combine with one other equipment package.

Paramedic: This cyberswarm deploys painkillers and cleans wounds. These swarms are often sprayed over urban disaster sites. It behaves as if it had the first aid skill with score 12.

Repair: Designed to fix a specific make and model of equipment only. A repair swarm designed to work with the Mr. Foamy Fire Extinguisher Model 2A cannot repair a broken machine gun. It behaves as if it had the *repair* skill with score 12, but checks are made once per 30 minutes.

Sentry: Circles a room, vehicle, or person to neutralize and destroy any cyberswarm within a 5 meter radius. A sentry swarm inflicts 1, 2, or 3 mortals on an enemy cyberswarm on an Ordinary, Good or Amazing success. A sentry swarm can attack each phase, and does so with a skill score of 12.

Spy: Dust mote chassis only. Spread over a living room or hallway (approximately 30 square meters), these nanites record images and sounds, and transmit back to an attuned ACD. These nanites are vulnerable to bug-hunter swarms and sentries. Spy dust has a score of 12 in *perception*.

Stinger: A hypodermic injector can deliver a tiny dose of poison or some other drug to a target. Checks made to resist this poison are made at a -1 step bonus, since it's such a small dose. The stinger attacks with a skill score of 12. Stingers loaded with sedatives or irritants are considered "controlled" availability; those armed with more deadly drugs fall under military jurisdiction.

Terraformer: Designed to seed a planet with bacteria, plants, oxygen, and other necessities. Terraformer swarms are deployed in the millions across a virgin world, and they typically require decades if not centuries to work. (They are presented for the sake of completeness.)

Utility Fog: Perhaps the most valuable of the cyberswarms, these nanites consist of "foglets" that can link hands. When enough of them link together, they can mimic solid objects. Basically, items appear out of the air, and then disappear when the foglets let go of each other. Utility fog is sold with an acoustic control device [see under "Equipment"], so the owner can give it orders in real time.

Utility fog can produce any simple object that weighs one kilogram or less, assuming the appropriate 3D blueprints exist. This takes one minute (5 rounds) to create an object; dissolving a fogged object is instantaneous. Utility fog could make a shirt, a set of house keys, a cup, or a knife. The foglets do not mimic any chemical properties: they do not conduct electricity, for example, so they could not form copper wires. You can adjust the density of fogged objects, from a minimum of nearly zero (you can walk through the swarm, after all) to about as dense as wood. Like wood, fogged objects will burn: kinetic energy of the flames causes the foglets to lose their grip.

Note that this is an entirely different process than what happens inside a uni-

Cyberswarm

Niche: Nanotech distributed robot

Biome: Gravity Age societies with mature nanotechnology

Likelihood: Possible (50%)

Number : 1dB

STR 1 INT 4 (Animal 14)

DEX 9 WIL 10

CON 12 PER 1

Durability: 12/12/6 Action Check:: Acts in each phase

Move: Walk 2 (crawler) or Fly 6 (aerial) # Actions: 4

Reaction Score: Amazing/4 Last Resorts: None

Durability Note: When a swarm loses all wounds, it is destroyed. Since swarms are effective only because there are so many elements, as it gets damaged its effectiveness diminishes. Simulate this by using the dazed rules from the *Players Handbook*.

Attacks:

Devourer	12/ 6/ 3	d0	LI/O	Personal	d4s/d4+2s/d4w/d4+2w*
Stinger	12/ 6/ 3	d0	LI/O	Personal	Success delivers poison (GMG, p59); target resists with -1 bonus

*The devourer hits on what is normally a Failure (a Marginal success in effect) and can only miss on a Critical Failure.

Defenses:

Semi-immaterial: Targeted attacks (melee and ranged) suffer a +5 step penalty, but a swarm is defenseless against area-of-effect attacks: fire, acid, explosions, smoke grenades, sentry swarms, etc. *

*Crawlers have a +1 step resistance modifier against area-of-effect attacks. Dust motes have -1 step resistance modifier against such attacks.

Skills:

Package Skill at 12; Knowledge (4); Awareness (10); Resolve (10).

Description:

A cyberswarm is a horde of nanites, or artificial micro-organisms, which range in size from bacteria to gnats. The devourer and stinger swarms are the two most commonly encountered in combat. While the devourer is strictly a battlefield weapon and only deployed in the direst circumstances, stinger swarms loaded with sedatives, irritants, hallucinogens or other drugs occasionally see use among police departments and security forces; versions with lethal poisons, however, generally remain the province of the military.

versal assembler. There, inert molecules are wrangled into shape by nanites. Here, the nanites themselves hold hands. It's the difference between building a real house using tools made from Legos, or building the entire house out of Legos to begin with.

Cyberswarm Details

Cyberswarms are generally about as smart as a well-trained dog (Int 4), and can obey detailed instructions. Individuals who want greater control may use an ACD attuned to that swarm; otherwise when the swarm is confronted with a very unexpected situation it must improvise.

Cyberswarms generally have a skill score of 12 in whatever applies to their purpose.

Since it is composed of thousands of elements, a swarm can generally act in every phase of a round, and therefore does not worry about action checks.

Cyberswarms are highly resistant to targeted attacks like laser beams or machine gun fire, but they are easily damaged by area-of-effect attacks and other hazards, such as explosions, fire, acid, high levels of background radiation, or gravitic flytraps.

Other Topics.

Progress levels, how to implement it in your campaign, and so on.

Putting It All Together...

[This flavor text is exceptionally heavy with nanotech, but I wanted to apply all the gadgets I could, to show how things work. Note that an analogous scenario could be handled using traditional PL 7 macrotechnology; really I'm only using different terminology.]

The rogue nanotechnologist, Dr. Vimalaputri Kavallaris, slips on her smart camo and checks her octopus knife. Everything's ready to go. She's spent weeks scoping out the Delhi Municipal Assembler, and now she's ready to steal a bush robot for her comrades in the Liberation Army of Kashmir.

The guard at the security door is wearing nanofluidic armor; Vima's octopus knife would be useless against it. But luckily she slipped some intelligent poison into his mug in the cafeteria. Right on schedule, he screams and collapses as his brain turns to jelly. Thanks to the spy dust she deployed last week, she already knows the access codes to the blast door, and she slips invisibly inside.

Now she's in an unfamiliar area. Suddenly she begins to feel itchy. Then sores erupt all over her body. Of course! They've set up a devourer swarm to protect this area! In a panic, Vima sprints down the hallway, rounds a corner, and pops the lid on her sentry swarm. The sentries spread out in a diffuse cloud and engage in an invisible duel with the devourers.

Vima presses forward. When she realizes she's too short to peer over an obstruction, she activates her utility fog and instructs it to become a stool. Yet before too long, she falls prey to a stinger swarm, which injects a powerful sedative into her bloodstream. Even though Vima has taken the precaution of loading a helpful nanomod to police her body chemistry, her luck finally runs out.

Realizing that capture means certain death, she consoles herself with the knowledge that her comrades made a braintape before she commenced the mission. At least they can reprogram a clone with her memories...

Bush Robot

Niche: Nanoindustrial Manufacturing Robot

Biome: Gravity Age industrial zones

Likelihood: Very unlikely

Number : 1d4

STR 6 INT 14

DEX 16 WIL 8

CON 12 PER 3

Durability: 12/12/6 Action Check 17+/16/8/4

Move: Walk 3, Roll 9 # Actions: 3

Reaction Score: Good/3 Last Resorts: None

Attacks:

Flense 14/ 7/ 3 dO LI/O Personal d6+1s/d4+1w/d6+1w

Defenses:

-3 resistance modifier vs melee attacks

+3 resistance modifier vs ranged attacks

+2 INT resistance modifier vs encounter skills

Armor (Casing): d4-2 (LI), d4-2 (HI), d4-2 (En)

Skills:

INT: Computer Science [14]-*programming* [17]; Life Science [14]; Physical Science [14]-*chemistry* [15], *nanotech* [22]; Technical Science [14] -*invention* [17]; *repair* [16]

Description:

A bush robot is a fractal "tree"—a trunk that splits into many branches, which in turn split into many other branches, and so on down to "twigs" which are measured in nanometers. At full extension it is over 3 meters tall, but in normal operation it curls up into a synthetic tumbleweed about one meter in diameter. A bush robot costs \$250,000 and is only available to those with restricted access: governments and the most powerful and trustworthy corporations.

The bush robot fills a vital niche in the industrial manufacturing process: it uses thousands of atomic-sized fingertips to move individual atoms and molecules together to build nanites. It is, in essence, a nanite factory: nearly all the nanites in production today were made by bush robots. A bush robot can build a cyberswarm or nanomod in one day.

Bush robots generally take their instruction from other computers or human specialists; they have no personality and are not designed to interact with human beings in social settings. They are aware of their value, and are hardwired to alert their owners immediately if someone tries to tamper with their programming. A hacked bush robot could become an extraordinarily dangerous munitions factory, and for this reason they are usually protected by fortress programs of at least Good quality.

In the unlikely event that a bush robot engages in melee, it uses its micro-manipulators to strip a target into atoms. This feels like getting the layers of your skin peeled off.

What Progress Level is Nanotechnology?

The Alternity system's division of technology into "progress levels" is a pretty crude tool, and it becomes very hard to plop nanotech into a single division. I would place most nanotech in the late Fusion Age, for the following reasons:

The basic scientific principles behind nanotechnology were known in the

1950's, and have been extremely well documented in modern day technical literature. The concept of nanotech is bound to occur in any society with Information Age medical science, since the key insight is to realize that living cells are nothing but complex machines. Cells are nanites; they merely evolved naturally. Well-informed molecular biologists in an Information Age society, on

Earth or elsewhere, would be able to imagine the idea of nanotech and even work up a detailed scientific study of the principles involved.

Though the scientific problems associated with nanotech have already been solved, the technical questions remain open, and are likely to remain so for a decade or two, even at the earliest. We're just not sure how to go about building this stuff; our "hands" are too weak and too clumsy in 2003. What we really need are some improved methods of protein synthesis and some more precise atomic force microscopes, but the improvement required is relatively minor. This isn't like inventing the space shuttle in 1500 AD; it's more like inventing the automobile in 1850, except we already have some naturally occurring examples to study. Presumably these problems can be solved pretty quickly, especially considering the funding that is currently being poured into biotech research.

To put it another way, we need Fusion Age biotech and computer science to really put the pieces together. From a scientific standpoint, nanotech is a Fusion Age baby. The *Players Handbook* places the Fusion Age between 2047 and 2160. This is roughly the timeframe suggested by serious scientific work on the subject, and it's reasonable to assume that most Fusion Age societies will show at least some interest in nanotechnology.

Conceivably nanotech might have to wait until 2200, or even 2250, but it seems extremely unrealistic to place it much later: you would have to assume that the human race has no interest in improving its health, augmenting its industries, or making a profit. We've known since the 1950's that nanotech is achievable, we have a pretty good idea of how to do it, and unless everything we know about molecules is wrong we'll probably be able to do it in a few decades.

Of course, if you don't want to deal with nanotechnology in your Fusion Age setting, you can simply declare that various social forces retarded its development, or that certain engineering problems proved surprisingly intractable. It's

your game, and you can introduce nanotech at any point you'd like. The Gravity Age seems to display an astonishing command over genes and robots, however, and energy is very cheap, so if you plan to delay nanotech past this stage you should probably have a very plausible reason.

Nanotechnology in Star*Drive Campaigns.

On a casual inspection, nanotech gets pretty shabby treatment in the Star*Drive setting. The Mechalus have some nano-junk, and the *Arms and Equipment Guide* includes a smattering of gear. But for the most part, the subject never comes up.

Of course, that's the problem with casual inspections: you miss all the details. Nanotechnology already exists in this setting; you just need to connect the dots and think through the consequences. First of all, the Mechalus are made from nanotechnology; they have an entire planet that operates on the stuff. Certainly all the gadgets listed in this document would exist on Aler. In the Fusion Age, even humans developed "cytronic circuitry," which, as described in the *Players Handbook*, would not work using macrotech principles (hence the "nano" in nanocomputer). The setting's radical mutations and rapid terraforming indicate a confluence of biotechnology, nanomods, and helpful nanites. *The Planet of Darkness* adventure devotes considerable space to Organism Omega, which is nothing more than an especially deadly cyberswarm. Since Omega represents an ultra-advanced version, less powerful cyberswarms should already exist. Meanwhile, practically every page of the Star*Drive setting mentions mining raw materials, but there are very few mentions of factories. It's quite possible that these raw elements get processed into goo stock for universal assemblers, at least in the more sophisticated systems of Old Space. (However, if companies make 3D blueprints available on the Grid, it may greatly reduce the need for space travel, since there's less need for shipping.)

In other words, it looks like nanotech

was omitted largely because it would require a lot of space to describe fully, but it's definitely operating between the lines. Based on the timeline of the setting, it seems like nanotech only became widespread during the Gravity Age, and may not have hit the Verge at all. This may offer the best solution: establish nanotech as a fact of life of Old Space, but only just beginning to reach the Verge after the Long Silence. This enables a GM to keep most of the setting unchanged, and gradually introduce as much or as little nanotech as she wishes.

With that in mind, nanotech offers plenty of story ideas. The Verge systems have suffered a crushing backslide, and lost most of their Gravity Age technology. Clearly several paramilitary factions, from the pirates of Lucullus to the soldiers of Algernon, would love to get their hands on cyberswarm weapons. Heroes might act as arms smugglers, or law enforcers out to curtail proliferation. What happens if one of these weapons runs amok? What do you do if a devourer swarm begins chewing through a hospital? You can't evacuate the bedridden patients, but you can't blow the place up either...

On a deeper level, introducing nanotech to the Verge leads to delicious political instability. The Vergers have a strong economy through conventional industry. But now the Arrivers show up with nanotech devices and designs. Arriver factories are cheap, pollution-free, and perfectly reliable; Arriver goods are flawless and almost dirt cheap. It's the sort of thing that could ruin every corporation in the region and drive billions of people out of work. Maybe it's these same threatened Verge companies who secretly bankroll Concord Free Now? If the heroes discovered this fact, would they announce it to the public, or allow themselves to be bought off? What would such an announcement do the political landscape of the Verge? Meanwhile this tension could be exploited for adventures that focus on industrial espionage, demolitions, and terrorism.

Nanotechnology in Dark Matter Campaigns.

The Dark Matter campaign milieu, set in the modern world, isn't really the place for widespread nanotech. Yet the sandmen are explicitly described in nanotechnological terms, and the etoile are obviously variants on the bush robot, though this is never stated overtly. A campaign that revolves around the sandmen as enemies, or as heroes, can't avoid dealing with nanotech in some form.

Dark Matter does not mention cyberswarms, but a devourer might make a pretty terrifying enemy in the right circumstances, particularly if the heroes don't know what they are up against. An assassin armed with a smart knife and a suit of nanofluidic armor would be an exceptionally dangerous foe, easily a match for the Bounty Hunter from the X-Files. A universal assembler might be linked to the mythological Horn of Plenty, the Philosophers' Stone of the hermetic alchemists, or even the Holy Grail. A mysterious plague may turn out to be a bullseye disease designed by the CIA to eliminate genetic undesirables. Confronted with these weird powers, human researchers might suggest the possibility of nanotechnology, but it's still a crackpot concept. More importantly, Information Age technology isn't really designed to counteract nanotech threats, so heroes may need to ask

other Illuminati groups, such as the Greys, for help.

If you're interested in using nanotech in your game, the first resource to check is Uncle Jimbo's Sandman resources, listed in the Links section below. Jimbo and I have taken different approaches to nanomod: he treats them as cybergear, and I'm handling them as pseudo-mutations. But aside from that, our systems seem fairly compatible.

Nanotech in Star Craft and Gamma World Campaigns.

I don't own these books, so I can't comment. Obviously this is a tragedy for the entire Alternity community! You should send me some money right away so I can buy them. I accept PayPal.

Personal Commentary.

Ever since I read the Alternity rules, the absence of nanotechnology frustrated me. It's an integral part of modern science-fiction, but aside from one or two throwaway gadgets it seemed like the authors had never heard of it! Several Alternity fans have tried to rectify the situation, particularly Lars Wolfrum and Jim Clunie. Their admirable nanotech supplements include quite a few interesting devices, and I wanted to expand on what they have written

Also, a lot of this material, particularly the information cyberswarms, adapts the *GURPS Transhuman Space* cam-

paign setting, written by David Pulver. Although *THS* uses the intolerably dense *GURPS* rules, it's a fascinating book and would make an intriguing Alternity campaign; it heavily influenced on my own PBEM game. Rush out and buy it so I don't get sued!

Various Links.

Lars Wolfrum's nanotech material is available at:

<http://www.alternity.net/resources/85/original/Nanoimplants.rtf>

You can find Uncle Jimbo's Dark Matter flavored nanotech at:

http://www.alternity.net/resources/359/original/sandman_cyber_gear.doc

Jimbo also maintains a page about the sandmen, the nano-infected conspirators of Dark Matter.

<http://homepages.ihug.com.au/~jclunie/darkmatter/sand.htm>

Also, the classic non-fiction book on nanotech, *Engines of Creation* by K. Eric Drexler, is available on the Web for free.

<http://www.foresight.org/EOC/>

And Ralph Merkle, a prominent nanotech researcher, is a good source for hard science.

<http://www.merkle.com/>



SIDEBAR: ALTERNITY GAME PROP

Under the Table Nanotech

A lost business card is found under the table at a bar frequented by mercenaries and spacers. The word "Stinger" is written on the card, referring to the product the former holder of the card was hoping to purchase. Moskita Technology Solutions is a front company for the illegal distribution of military grade nanotechnology by a local criminal organization.

sidebar and art by Daryl Blasi



Planet Penates, Lucullus System, Verge

by Montgomery Cook IX • illustration by mig nova

DO NOT GO TO PENATES. EVER. This planet's barbarism, lack of structure and order is beyond comparison. Imagine my surprise, as I found out en route that Penates was a former Solar penal colony. I was not amused in the slightest. Somewhere between deboarding my transport and hailing my skycab in Port Royal and checking into the hotel (a dismal hole-in-the-wall flop-house packed to capacity with drunks, drug addicts and other low-lives), I apparently had been robbed blind, even down to my souvenir Jubilee Consortium towels. I was fortunate enough to have the where-with-all to keep my identification in an inside jacket pocket.

I really need to have words with my editor on this one. The jolt of leaving such an idyllic paradise such as Bluefall and arriving on Penates only to find out about Penates' (and by extension, Lucullus's) reputation was such a cruel and unusual punishment (for what offense, I can only guess). I found myself seriously reconsidering my assignment here in the Verge. Anyway, I have a job to do, and I will honor it, in spite of this recent turn of events.

Fortunately for me, I was able to replace some of my lost items, my gridcaster not included, so that I could make this report. The lodging was appropriately cheap, only \$300 Concord a night at the Silver Comet. The lodging included a passable theater, casino and a few 2 and 3 star restaurants (and I'm being generous here).

A trip to The Golden Quarter holds promise of entertainment (my passion: gambling), but is full of some very rough types, corsairs, mercenaries, thugs and the lot. I was offered for purchase several different substances, all of which are known to be illegal on other worlds so many times, I lost count. And a simple "no" simply does not suffice to many of these pushy vendors. In fact, one even suggested that I was in the wrong place to not be in the market for such "wares".



I was intimidated, threatened, and almost outright assaulted a number of times in this what I later learned to be territory of the Jamaican Syndicate. Apparently the whole planet is ruled by differing bands of thugs and bullies who compete with one another over this hell-hole of a rock.

I opted to cut short my stay on Penates, thus canceling my tour or other cities and so-called sights of interest here, and book passage on the first transport off-world. I was fortunate to have my timing of my stay on Penates coincide with the arrival of the *Lighthouse*. It is there that I made my exodus, and where I will pick up my travel log. Until then, I remain...

Yours faithfully,

Montgomery V. Cook IX

Fan Letters

Mr. Cook,

I'm a ship mechanic and aspiring travel guide writer (I have been published in the amateur periodical *Stars Unlimited*). I was wondering how you broke into the biz. Could you give me some advice? Do you have assistants or junior reporters? What's your favorite vacation spot?

Sincerely,

Jacob "Kooter" Duke

The Rhodium Rascal, Stronthum Industries, Rigunmor

So you want advice on how to break into this cut-throat, competitive business? Mind you that this is a very competitive field, and being a potential competitor, no, no advice. You can however make the journey to Penates, Lucullus to finish my abandoned tour there, if you'd like... There are a few others out there working on the Guide to Open Space, but much of the burden falls

squarely on my shoulders. To date, I've thoroughly enjoyed Bluefall in the Aegis system, but my present stay aboard the Lighthouse is pleasant, as well, and with much better law enforcement than Penates can possibly claim.

To the delicious Space Cowboy,

Hey gorgeous. My name is Nova Starr (my stage name). I was wondering if you would be kicking up your boots in StarMech space anytime soon. I could show you around my sector of space. Give you the inside track to all the parties too hot to advertise. Do you have a girlfriend/wife/boyfriend? If not, are you looking for someone? (See attached vid for full coverage of my talents.) Kiss, kiss.

To answer: No, no plans to head back to the Stellar Ring yet (though my recent trip to Penates just about convinced me to throw in the towel). I am single, and definitely NOT interested. By the way, your holo's corrupt. It shows this balding, middle-aged human male in a thong... Yuck!

ZYMETH

by Dragan Ciric • illustration by Dragan Ciric

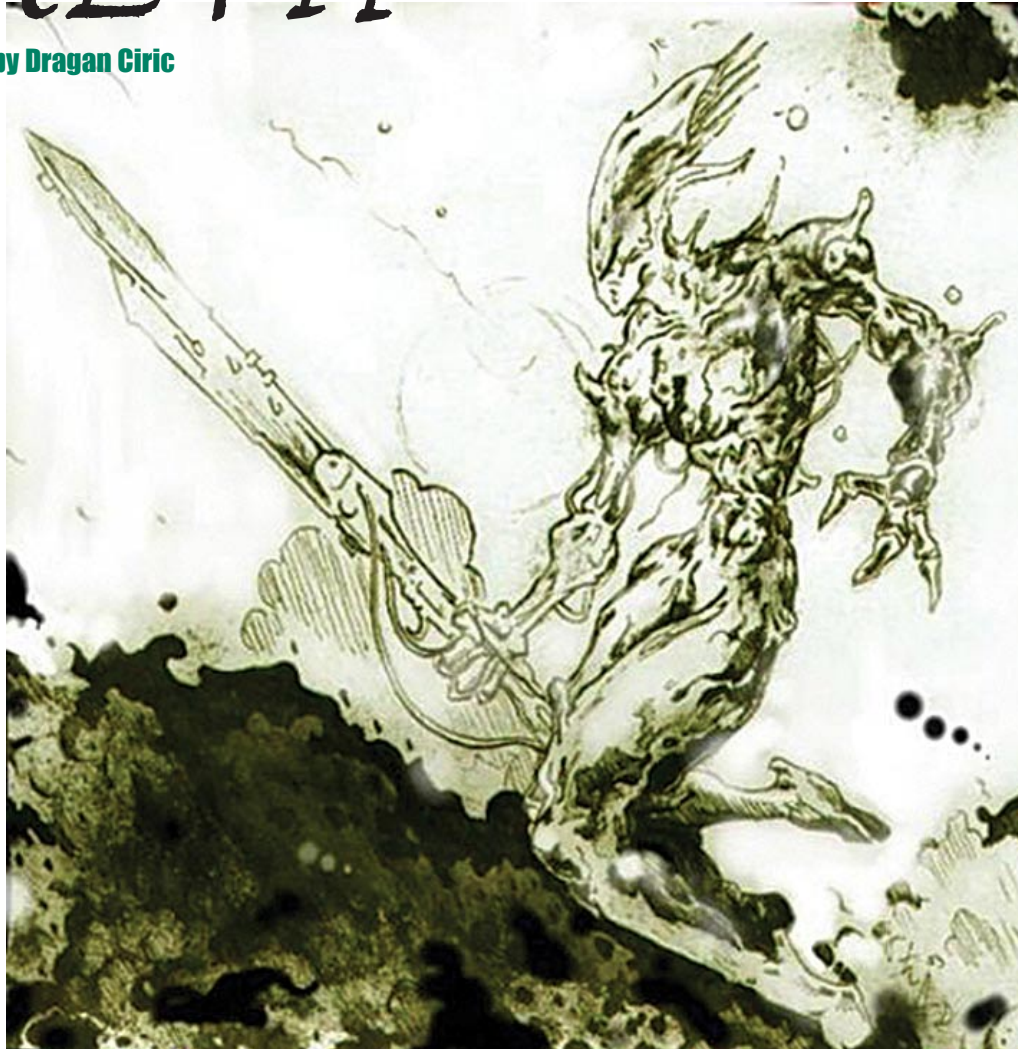
"While approaching planet Cyrus we encountered spaceship of unknown origin. It failed to respond to our communication signal so we sent docking crew to investigate it. Inside we found four dead members of unknown species. We took bodies back to our ship for examination while our tech crew remained aboard the alien ship to try to figure out where the ship came from.

Examination showed that these aliens are capable of breathing under water and that they probably communicate via telepathy. Their death was caused by disease they contracted while investigating ruins on Cyrus. This leads to conclusion they have very weak immune system since disease is not stronger than flu.

When we discover where they came from we will journey to their planet of origin in order to establish contact."

Report of Darag Kyrri

Captain of Nomad



Form and Physiology: Zymeth are amphibious aliens from the swamp world Chaar. They are approximately 1.7 meters tall, their skin is dark olive or gray and has a very distinct scent. Zymeth communicate via telepathy among themselves although they can speak out loud with no problem.

Zymeth are quiet and contemplative and quite philosophical concerning life since they recently discovered that they are dying race.

History and Society: Zymeth owe their existence to the race they call the Ancients. After creating the Zymeth and teaching them about the basics of their technology, the Ancients suddenly left Chaar leaving the Zymeth on their own. In the following eons the Zymeth researched technological wonders left to them by the Ancients and started exploration of their solar system. Somewhere during that time a genetic flaw

started to manifest.

When it became apparent that they were facing extinction on a racial level, the Zymeth set to the stars in search for the Ancients - possibly the only race that could help them overcome their genetic flaw.

Shortly after, a fraal-human exploration ship landed on Chaar following navigational codes they found in a derelict Zymeth ship, whose entire crew succumbed to disease due to genetic flaws.

Zymeth are asexual and do not reproduce by mating. When a Zymeth dies he is brought to one of the Mothers, giant bioorganic constructs used to reprocess the body and birth new Zymeth. New Zymeth have no recollection of their predecessors' memories whatsoever, although some exceptions have been recorded throughout their history. Portions of dead Zymeths' DNA are preserved and used in thermal lances which

is presented to newborn Zymeth at a certain age.

Zymeth society is divided into five castes: Supervisors (leaders of the society), Enlighteners (scientists, explorers, philosophers, artists etc.), Alcolytes (Zymeth warriors and adepts), Architects (workers and builders) and Seekers (Zymeth mindwalkers). Castes respect each other, acknowledging values that others bring to entire Zymeth society. Because of their respect for each other and respect to the race as a whole no war has ever been recorded in the entire Zymeth history (the function of soldiers is to protect Zymeth from hostile fauna of Chaar). However, never being involved in war has made the Zymeth quite naive when it comes to trusting anyone. They find it hard to understand that a sentient being would wish to harm, emotionally and/or physically, another sentient life form.

One of the most important parts of Zymeth life is song. Zymeth often congregate around Mothers and sing. Other races comment on their singing as strange and alien but extremely beautiful. There are no set words, and their music is a harmonizing hum of voices that keeps magnifying until it reaches an explosive finale. Lone Zymeth will sing only when he wants to express magnitude of emotions at a certain moment.

Zymeth built their cities above and under the water. Each Zymeth city is centered around the building where a

Mother resides. The building is guarded by Kin'raa - Zymeth elite forces. From this central location, a Zymeth city stretches outward in all directions, with tall hi-tech buildings and many structures left over by the Ancients whose functions are still unknown.

Roleplaying: Zymeth are inclined towards philosophy and inner reflection. They often speak about life and death with a dose of pessimism, but it is due to the situation their entire race is in. They respect all life and will only use violence when everything else fails. Zymeth are inclined toward Diplomat and Mindwalker careers. Some are Combat Specs, Tech Ops and Adepts (Combat Spec) but few take Free Agent as their profession.

Zymeth are easy to make friends with. They are "a shoulder to cry on", supportive and kind, and they will go to great lengths in order to help someone they consider worthy-even if it means turning to violence (but only as the last solution).

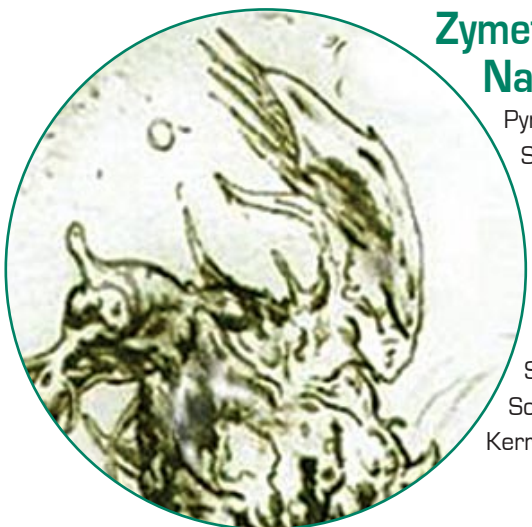
Using Zymeth in Campaign:

Zymeth can be introduced in a far-future campaign. Their first contact with humans and fraal was marked with tragedy as one of Zymeth ships was returned with crew that died while searching for the Ancients. However, the Zymeth respected the return of their bodies and they were very excited about their meeting with the fraal,

another sentient species with a deep philosophical outlook on world. Soon thereafter they joined the intergalactic community and together they started the search for the Ancients as well as alternative solutions for the Zymeth problem.

Zymeth treat all other races with great respect. They have the greatest respect for humans and fraal. They look with sympathy on t'sa and their curious nature and respect weren as formidable warriors and have engaged in numerous discussions with their philosophers. They find it hard to fathom mechalus and their tech-oriented society and they find Sesheyans strange.

One logical campaign with Zymeth that presents itself is a quest for the Ancients. This may lead to an exploration campaign and a search for alien artifacts that points the way to the Ancients. While they may, once found, help the Zymeth they can also show ignorance to their pleas. Maybe Zymeth were created to be their foot soldiers (hence their hive abilities) and the genetic flaw was made on purpose as a fail-save device. Or the Ancients were just playing around and when they discovered the flaw they moved on with their research leaving Zymeth to slowly vanish. Or they can present a solution that requires reprocession of other races into their DNA. What will the Zymeth do then?



Zymeth Names

Pymmin
 Sysk
 Naamek
 Leood
 Feyalii
 Etayill
 Ayellan
 Syllot
 Soliyus
 Kerrani

Zymeth Ability Scores Limits

Zymeth are slightly weaker than average humans giving them a Strength score range between 4 and 13. Life above and under water has made them adaptable to different environments so they are slightly faster (Dex 5-15). Due to genetic deterioration Zymeth constitution is rather weak (Con 4-11). Zymeth are as smart as any other race (Int 8-14) but recent discovery of the almost imminent extinction of their race has oriented them toward philosophy and deep thinking (Will 9-15). Finally their body odor, alien outlook (by human standards) and a bit pessimistic view of life ranges their personality between 4-12.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
4/13	5/15	4/11	8/14	9/15	4/12

Zymeth gain the following broad skills: Melee Weapons, Movement, Knowledge, Resolve, Interaction, and Telepathy.

Zymeth Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series 1

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Biome: Swamps and Land

Encounter Chance: Common

Group Size: 1-8

Organization: Castes

Intelligence: Sentient

Zymeth Perks

Ancestral knowledge

Cost: 3, INT, Active

Some Zymeth have kept portion of their predecessor knowledge when they have been reprocessed. This perk provides Zymeth with -1 bonus on all Knowledge skill checks.

Zymeth flaws

Mutation

Bonus skill points: 4

Genetic deterioration of Zymeth has progressed so much that his body has mutated. Zymeth with this flaw receives d4 drawback mutation points.

Shattered link

Bonus skill points: 6

At some point in a Zymeth's life something happened and he lost his hive abilities. Maybe he hurt another Zymeth or did something that caused damage to the entire Zymeth society. A Zymeth with this flaw does not receive the -1 step bonus for the presence of other members of their species.

GMs note: In order to remove this flaw Zymeth must undertake a special quest and pay the skill point cost.

Zymeth Game Data

STR 10 [4+d6]

INT 12 [8+d6]

DEX 13 [5+d10]

WILL 14 [9+d6]

CON 8 [5+d6]

PER 9 [4+2d4]

Durability: 8/8/4/4

Action Check: 15+/14/7/3

Move: Run 22, Walk 4, Swim 4

Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 1

Psionic Energy Points: 14

Attacks:

Unarmed 10/5/2 d0 LI/O Personal d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s

Thermal Lance 11/5/2 d0 En/O 10/20/30 d6+2w/3d4w/d4+1m

Defenses:

+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Advantages:

Hive Skills: For each Zymeth in a 30 meter radius Zymeth gets -1 step bonus to their skill checks. It is unknown how Zymeth accomplish this. It is speculated that it has something to do with the way Zymeth were created. Perhaps they were created from single entity or their genes mix while they are processed and reproduced in Mothers and create links. Or it is something they achieved through respect of each other and all life.

Water Breathing: Due to their amphibian physiology, Zymeth can breath under water

Zero-g Adaptation: Since Zymeth tend to spend majority of their time under water they find it easier to get use to Og environment which results in a -1 step bonus to their zero-g training skill checks.

Weaknesses:

Weapon Bound: Zymeth use weapons known as Thermal Lances. It is not due to the power or effectiveness of Thermal Lance but because each Thermal Lance contains part of genetic materials from their predecessors inside-a bond to their past. Zymeth will under no circumstances use any other weapon. In extreme situations Zymeth is allowed mental resolve check with +2 step penalty.

Genetic Deterioration: Zymeth are dying race. When they were created by the Ancients there was genetic flaw in their DNA that showed itself some three centuries ago. Zymeth have +1 step penalty to resist disease and poisons at level 1, and they receive additional +1 step at levels 7. Further more at level 14 their Constitution score drops by one.

Naive: Zymeth have +1 step penalty to resist Deception-bluff. Players can eliminate this penalty when they reach level 5 by spending 4 skill points.

Skills:

STR: Melee weapons [10]-powered [11]

DEX: Acrobatics [13]-dodge [14]

CON: Movement [8]-swim [12]

INT: Knowledge [12]

WIL: Resolve [14]

PER: Telepathy [9]-contact [11]; Interaction [9], Culture [9]-etiquette [10]

Zymeth Weapons

Thermal Lance

The Thermal Lance is powered by a unique combination of an energy clip and the Zymeth's DNA. It is a close combat weapon that heats itself from within. Every third round the heat accumulates and it can be released in a stream of burning molecules. When the stream is fired a normal *Melee-powered weapons* skill check is made but without any bonuses.

Skill	Acc	Range	Type	Damage	Actions	Mass	Avail	Cost
Melee-powered	-1	Personal or 10/20/30	En/O	D6+2w/3D4w/D4+1m	3	2	Res	8000

Uberchicken

by David Tormsen • illustration by Chris Campbell

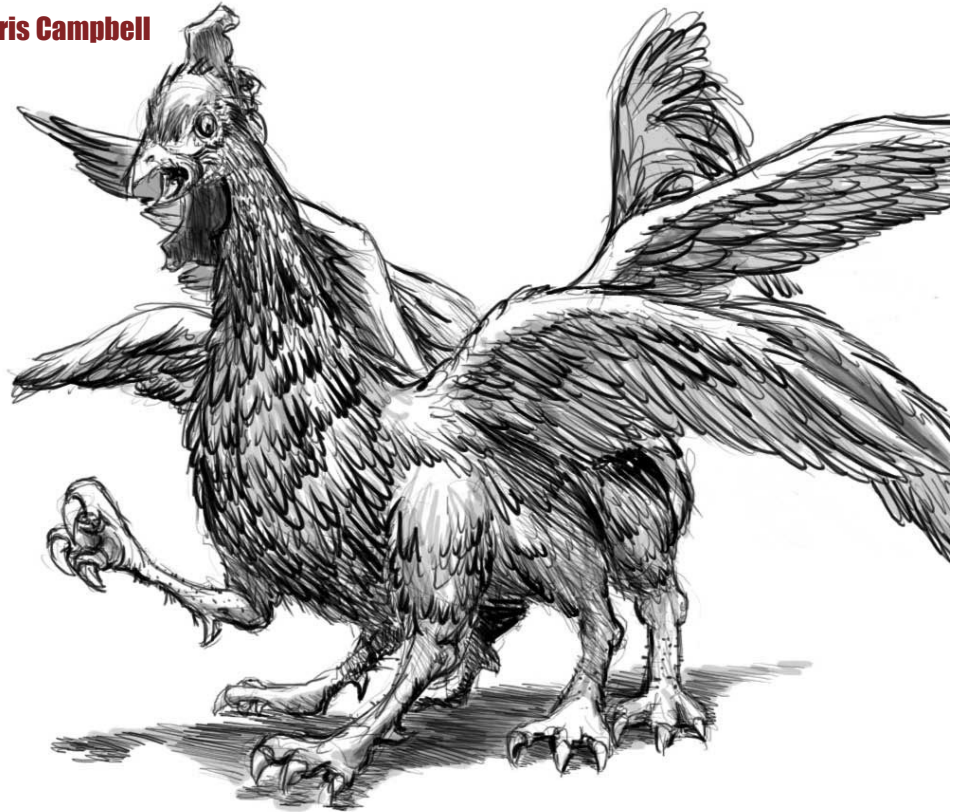
"Hey Herb do you hear something?"
 "Buk buk buk bukuuuuuk!"
 "Aaarrnggh!"

FOR many years, a common urban legend has been that of fast food companies tampering with the food they serve. While stories of Kentucky fried rats can be discounted as popular fallacies, the Hoffman Institute has uncovered evidence of a secret conspiracy involving a genetic research facility in Cuba and several major fast food companies. In pursuit of greater profits, this pact has sacrificed scientific ethics and common sense.

An experiment was begun in 1998 to develop a chicken with four legs and four wings. This was successful, and the companies were encouraged to continue research. Over the course of several years, the Cuban genetic company was able to stretch the chicken genome almost to its limit. In early 2001, in front of a shadowy group of fast food company CEOs and powerful shareholders, the Gonzales-Yun breed of chicken was unveiled, named after its developers.

A monster with multiple legs and wings, it was a docile and fat bird which, when kept in battery conditions, could be efficiently bred and culled, for cheap chicken for fast food restaurants across America and around the world. The fast food people were delighted, so much so that they ordered the construction of specialized battery farms for the raising of these uberchickens, as they became known in jest.

Three facilities were set up in the United States, one in Canada, one in Britain and one in Japan. For several months, all went to plan. Until one day in early 2002, the uberchickens escaped from the facility in Kentucky.



For it seemed that a side effect of the genetic research increased the uberchickens intelligence and aggressiveness, a reversal of their initial apparent docility. They killed all the workers, and escaped into the wild of Kentucky.

Similar disasters occurred at the Britain and Japan facilities, and the fast food people were aghast. They shut down the facilities, and liquidated the remaining uberchickens. They managed to capture and kill many of the escaped ones as well. They destroyed the paper trail connecting them to the problem, and hoped it would just go away.

But the uberchickens survived

Description: The uberchicken resembles somewhat a cross between a chicken and a centipede, as most have at least a dozen sets of legs and wings. They have a larger head than a normal chicken as well, and a larger beak. They can fly, maneuvering like an oriental dragon through the air in flight. They have powerful claws which leave many footprints behind them, and the sound of a scurrying uberchicken is quite frightening. They range from the size of a normal chicken to almost three times larger when in the wild

Encounter: Uberchickens instinctively avoid humans at all times, but if attacked will not hesitate to defend themselves. They tend to fly up high, then dive at their target to rake them with their claws. They will attempt to peck out eyes with their vicious beaks as well. They will flee if they suffer more than 50% wound damage, which won't take very long in most cases. However, they are fond of attacking targets when they are unaware, particularly at nighttime. If they dispatch their quarry, they will not hesitate to eat it.

Habitat/Society: The uberchicken is a predator, and very omnivorous, it will eat almost anything it can get its claws on. Most of the time, they hunt alone, avoiding human society and sticking to the wilderness. They avoid each other and for the most part are extremely territorial.

On the other hand, when an uberchicken couples with a female, they will construct a small underground nest in which warmth is maintained, for the female to lay her eggs. The male will defend the nest and his mate ferociously until the eggs hatch, then he will leave. The female will defend her nest until her chicks are fully grown, at which point they themselves leave to find mates and the cycle begins anew.

Uberchicken Game Data

STR 6 [d6+3] INT 4 [Animal 8 or d8+4]
 DEX 14 [d4+12] WIL 5 [d6+2]
 CON 7 [d4+5] PER 3 [Animal 7 or d4+5]
 Durability: 7/7/4/4 Action Check: 12+/11/5/2
 Move: run 6, walk 2, fly 8 #Actions: 1
 Reaction score: Ordinary/1 Last resorts: none

Attacks

Beak 8/4/2 d0 LI/O Personal d4s/d4+2s/d4w
 Claws 8/4/2 d0 LI/O Personal d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w

Defenses

-1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Skills

STR: Unarmed attack [6]-brawl [8]
DEX: Acrobatics [14]-dodge [16]-flight [16]; Stealth [14]-hide [15]
CON: Stamina [7]
WIL: Awareness [5]

Uberchickens also seem to have a small ability for cooperative action, notably against humans trying to kill a population of them. Being attacked by a flock of uberchickens is not a pleasant experience. From what little knowledge it has, the Hoffman Institute believes the uberchickens are developing a social order. They perform dances, much like bees, to impart information, and there have been cases of nests with multiple hens.

There are some 100 uberchickens scattered across Kentucky,

southern England, and Kyushu. They are breeding rapidly.

Adventure Hook: Reports of cattle mutilation leads investigators to discover an uberchicken nest. After documenting the discovery, they find themselves under close scrutiny by mysterious MIBs, who claim to work for the 'highest powers in the land' and threaten the heroes in order to keep them. However, as children begin to go missing the heroes are forced into a collision course with the Fast Food industry and its dark servants.



SIDEBAR: DARK MATTER GAME PROP

The Undead Poets Society

A scrap of paper with a macabre poem is found in a house haunted by the ghosts of a family murdered by a serial killer. The serial killer died in a car accident when leaving the scene of the crime and has returned to this house to terrorize his last victims as well as the living who have recently moved in.

*First was the mother with cheeks a cherry red,
 holding the newborn kissing its little head.
 Second was the child who cooed with delight
 his little fists waving, my finger held tight.
 Next was the father with rage held and bound,
 his anger silenced, as he rolled upon the ground.
 Last was the little doll, curls of golden hair,
 with my gentle song and kiss she slept without a care.*

sidebar and art by Daryl Blasi

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THE DISTRESS SIGNAL

A Tangents Adventure

by David Tormsen

YOUR heroes pick up a mysterious transmission, originating from a tangent world in the Historical Division, though near the border of the Biological Division. The message is in English, though with peculiar inflections, and then is repeated in Spanish, and is as follows, "Oh Crusaders of Gods Creation, Hear Our Call. Our World is in great peril. Agents of Satan are coming with fire and destruction to destroy and enslave us. We beseech you, Brave Men of Arms, Come to our Aid, and Ye shall be cleansed of all thy sins." It is an open broadcast. If your heroes are working for a tangent organization, or otherwise take orders, they are ordered to investigate the mysterious transmission. If they are an independent group, then it is up to their decision, the coordinates of the world are given along with the message.

What's Going On?

The world of Inquisition-4 [Cluster -8.467, +2.037] diverged from Baseline history with the birth of Henry IX, a healthy and robust son to the English king Henry VIII. Pampered and praised by his father, he ascended to the throne on the death of Henry VIII. However, he was a devout Catholic, and in his long reign consistently persecuted the Protestants in Britain, even to the extent of driving his sister Elizabeth into exile. His reign defined English history, as he developed close ties with the Spanish crown and the Papacy. He attempted to emulate the Spanish conquistadors by conquering West Africa and the South Pacific and converting those lands to the cross. On this world, the strength of the Catholic Church crushed the Reformation, and most fled to more tolerant Orthodox Russia and the Islamic world.

Competition between England and Spain dominated the formation of empires. Both, however, colluded to weaken and destroy the French, Dutch and Portuguese maritime empires. Close ties by marriage at the highest levels mean that England and Spain act in tandem. The two great fleets consistently dominated the seas, while throwing support behind unification of Italy under the Papacy. Conquistas and Crusades were organized against Muslim North Africa, India, South east Asia and Africa, while invasions of Japan and China were mounted, though they ultimately failed. In Europe, they dominated trade and politics, and made sure that all roads led to Rome. Rhetoric and mutual interests tied England and Spain forever to the Vatican.

By the dawn of the 21st century, this situation remains in effect. The Catholic Empire dominates Africa, the Americas, the Pacific, and much of Asia. It has enemies in the Ottoman

Middle East, Russia and China, but Japan has since converted to a peculiar form of hybrid Shinto and Catholicism, accepted as legitimate for political purposes by the Catholic Empire so long as the Emperor recognizes the supremacy of the Pope. The Ottomans, Russians and Chinese are united in opposition to the Catholic Empire, but squabble amongst themselves. A far greater threat are the Lutheran and other Protestant terrorists, denounced as heretics. They wage a constant campaign of attacks on Church officials and institutions, despite heavy penalties.

Much of the Catholic Empire must adhere to strict religious law, and the Inquisition is a very real danger. The many Protestants who practice their faith in secret live in fear of a late-night knocking at the door by Inquisitors. It is a tense world, with fear rampant. Technologically, Inquisition-4 is in late PL4, though they decline in PL3 in many sciences, such as medicine and astronomy. Culturally, it resembles a cross between 15th century Europe and Fascist Germany, a sort of Catholic 1984. The sky is brown from pollution, and the church bells are always ringing. The language of the elite and religious ceremonies is Latin, and the vernacular for most of the Catholic Empire is English, Spanish or a pidgin combination of the two known as Spanglish on other worlds.

It was in this environment that a group of PL6 tangent-travellers arrived and destroyed a small town in England. A brief clash with the local military left scores of men dead, but a single invader was captured, along with his technology. He was tortured by the English Inquisition, then burned at the stake. For he was inhuman, bestial. But they learned some of the secrets of his devices, including his communicator [Paratransponder], and they learned of a planned invasion of this world. Knowing they had no way of defeating the invaders and their advanced technology, they instead called for help.

The Invaders

The Invaders come from a world just within the Biological division called Unter [-10.348, +1.937]. On this world, the course of human evolution had taken a different course, and the Neanderthals had evolved to a greater degree than on Baseline. Cro-Magnon never arose to oppose them, and so Neanderthal culture continued, even developing the first use of Agriculture by the Baseline 20th Century. However, there innocence was quickly brought to an end with an invasion of their own. Strange Others arrived with advanced technology and enslaved their entire species in Baseline year 1953.

These others were Spartakist Germans from a world [-

9.374, +0.721] where the 1919 Spartakist revolution had succeeded, leading to a war with the Fascist Italians and an eventual three-way Cold War between Spartakist Europe, Bolshevik Russia and the United States which increased the technological development of the world. Over the course of their occupation of Unter, they reached early PL6. It was in Baseline year 1993 that the Neanderthals (or, the Untermensch as they were known by the Spartakists) rose up against their oppressors in a mass revolt. This was coincided with a popular revolution back on the Spartakists home world which ousted the government. In the chaos, contact was lost by the human colonists with their home world, and they were almost completely wiped out by their former slave race.

Though the Neanderthals were never particularly innovative, they could readily adopt human technology. They used the technology and knowledge the Spartakists has left behind to build up a mighty PL6 empire. However, they were restless. They wanted to punish the Others for their enslavement, and enslave them instead. So they set forth into tangent space. The first human world they came to was Inquisition-4.

They cared little about the details, to the Neanderthals all Others were alike. So they sent a small force through the test the defenses of the world. Having established the primitive state of affairs, they have begun to prepare for an invasion.

Neanderthal society has many castes, but three most important ones. The castes are meritocratic in nature. The strongest are initiated into the Soldier caste, taught in the ways of War and fighting with PL6 weapons, and sent into battle. The wisest and most reflected are initiated into the Philosopher-Leader caste, which governs the empire. The most innovative, the brightest and most unorthodox become the reviled Scientist class. They study the sciences and technology of the Others, copying it and attempting to crack the secret of Innovation, but are considered little better than sorcerers by the rest of the population. Other

castes exist, the Traders and the Workers for example, but the three above are the ones the heroes are most likely to meet.

Of humans, the Neanderthal think of them as dangerous demons. The Soldiers tend to be pragmatic, but hate the Others with a vengeance. The Philosopher-Leaders look down on humanity as quick-thinking but soulless creatures. The Scientist caste has the warmest opinion of humanity, as they begin to understand more about them in their studies and how they think. The only human language the Neanderthals know is German, and they refer to themselves as either Untermensch or the Volk.

The Armies


The armies of Inquisition Earth are archaic and hodgepodge. Tanks are unknown, though armored cars and motorcycles have replaced cavalry in the Catholic Empire. Bi-planes and monoplanes are both used, though mostly as dive-bombers. The navy is the strongest element, with the mighty English and Spanish battleship formations ready for war. Mustard Gas is in common use, as are other primitive forms of chemical and biological warfare. The atomic bomb does not exist, and the scientific basis needed to develop it simply does not exist (indeed, the Catholic Empire still holds to the Ptolemaic view of the Universe). Artillery is a major part of the battlefield. The army itself is armed with PL4 rifles and machine guns, though quality varies extremely between regiments. The armies of Russia, the Ottoman Empire and China are much the same, except they retain the use of cavalry. The Japanese military is deliberately styled after the English and Spanish.

The Invader armies are a mixture of late PL5 and early PL6. Most of the military uses PL5 projectile weapons, but military vehicles are more likely to be armed with heavy PL6 weapons. Vehicles are mainly armored skycars and a few skytanks. Besides them, the air force is comprised of PL5 fighter jets with PL6 tracking systems. They possess no navy, and do not use chemi-

cal or biological agents, nor do they possess the atomic bomb. Individual soldiers are clad in PL5 attack armor, though there are several regiments clad in PL6 powered armor. The Invaders use Quantum Tunnellers and carry Paratransponders, all of which are controlled by a single central computer mainframe on Unter. The Invaders themselves are as normal humans in terms of stats, but with +1 CON and -1 INT, and obvious facial differences.

The Heroes

Upon reaching Inquisition-4, the heroes are brought before the Pope, Edward VII, and the kings of Spain, Hernando IX and Robert VIII. The situation will be explained with much vigour and religious gusto, and the heroes will be asked to stop the imminent Invasion. They will be given absolution from their sins by the Pope, and given control of the Invader devices and access to the military of England and Spain, and to the dread Inquisitors.

How the heroes take it from here is up to the players and GM. Perhaps they must foil a plot by the Invaders to assassinate the Pope and send the Empire into disarray. Perhaps they must locate the Spartakist world and redirect the Invaders there. Perhaps they must infiltrate the Neanderthal world and contact the Scientist caste therein. They could simply begin to rally the defenses, and prepare for a war with a much more advanced enemy. The possibilities are as endless as the players and GMs imagination. 

Neopus

by Derek Holland • artwork by Daryl Blasi

War of the Elements

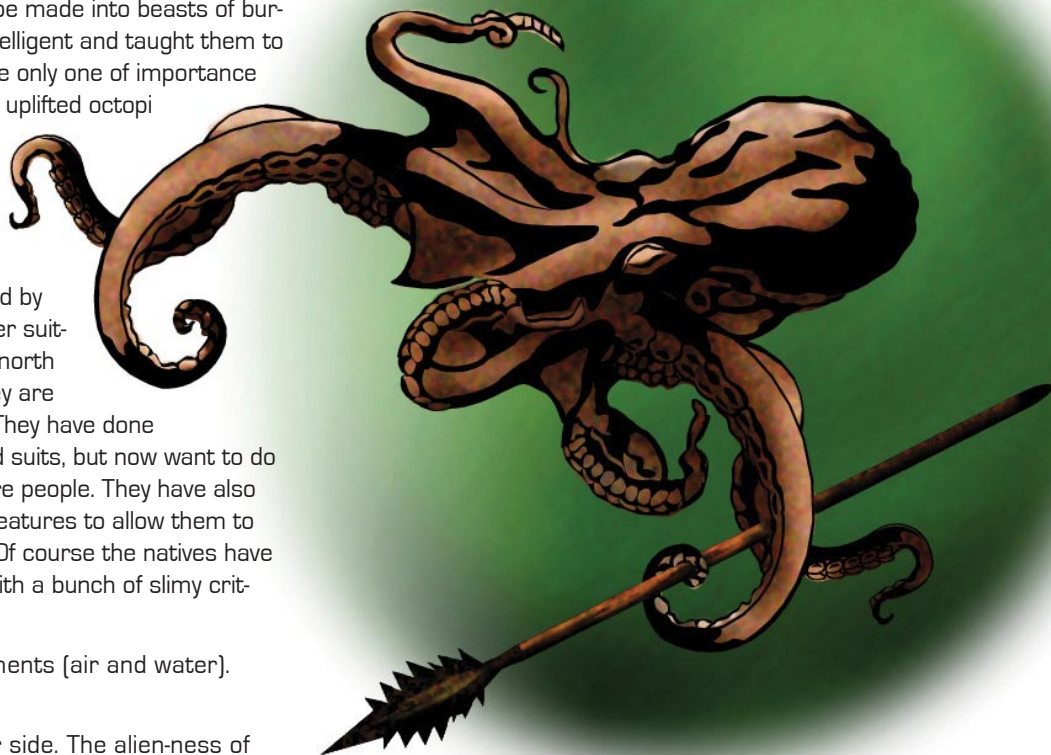
Before the Cataclysm, several nations of man manipulated several animals species to be made into beasts of burden. They made them more intelligent and taught them to use some basic technology. The only one of importance to survive is the neopus. These uplifted octopi have been using and improving the biotech man gave them and conquered a section of the continental shelf on the eastern coast of North America. Since they are blocked by the depths and creatures better suited to the water temperatures north and south of their territory, they are considering invading the land. They have done some exploring with specialized suits, but now want to do so with living buildings and more people. They have also have developed zeppelin like creatures to allow them to explore the land more quickly. Of course the natives have no desire to share their land with a bunch of slimy critters from the sea.

So starts the War of the Elements (air and water).

Notes

- 1) The PCs could be on either side. The alien-ness of the enemy should be emphasized.
- 2) The biotech of the neopus is not combat heavy. They have few beam weapons (lightning generators), but most of the weapons are melee in nature (which is why they have trouble moving north and south in the ocean.)
- 3) The neopus is expanding quickly because of their large number of offspring.
- 4) The neopus want to control the land, not kill everything on it.
- 5) The wet suits can be used indefinitely, as they gain oxygen from the air.

Society: The neopus may be the strangest colonial organism on the planet because they are not one species, but three. They act as one, but the "castes" can not interbreed. Also there is no intercaste strife, they treat each other as equals at all time. This even applies to those with extreme ability differences (ie the strong versus the weak, the intelligent versus the dull, etc.). This maybe why they are such a successful group of organisms and maybe a key in their relations to outsiders (which have to gain their trust first).



Habitat: All neopus are native to the continental shelf, but the ones most likely encountered will be within 50 Km of shore on land.

Technology: Use Neopus biotech is based on the halfling biotech from *Windriders of the Jagged Cliffs*. For those without that book here is an overview. All the living material produced by the neopus is based on a substance called pith. Pith can be created from just about any organic source. Pith is mixed with other substances and is molded into the desired form. It takes about 1 day per Kg to form a living tool, weapon, armor, etc. Almost all of the biotech is alive and must be fed a specific nutrient complex every 1d4+2 days or it will die and become useless. The reason I chose this form is to contain the invasion- there can't be escaped monsters and captured devices soon die.

Neopus wetsuit: To help the neopus survive, the suit has 3 membranes that allow oxygen to enter the water filling the suit. It acts as armor, but if any wound or mortal damage is taken, the suit springs a leak and will empty in 2d6 phases. After that, the neopus will begin to "drown".

Neopus Scientist Game Data

STR 5 (d4+3) INT 13 (d6+10)
 DEX 8 (d4+6) WIL 11 (d4+9)
 CON 7 (d6+4) PER 12 (d4+10)
 Durability: 7/7/4/4 Action Check 12+/11/5/2
 Movement: walk 2 swim 5 # of actions 2
 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts 2
 Mutations: Gills, Night Vision, regeneration (4 pt), Directional Sense
 Flaws: Diminished Senses, slight (due to suit),
 Environmental Sensitivity, extreme (air)
 Perk: Alien Mindset (+2 vs. encounter skills with other species))

Attacks

Tentacles 8/4/2 d0 LI/O Personal d4-1s/d4s/d4+1s

Defenses

-1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2(+4) INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 +1(+3) WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 Armor (skin): d4 (LI), d4-3 (HI), d4-2 (En)
 Armor (suit): d6-3 (LI), d4-2 (HI), d4-2 (En)

Skills

STR: Armor operation (5)-*wet suit* (11); Athletics (5)-*climb* (6);
 Unarmed attack (5)-*brawl* (6); **DEX:** Stealth(8)-*hide*(16);
CON: Movement (7)-*swim* (15); **INT:** Knowledge (13)-*first aid*(19)
WIL: Awareness (11)-*perception* (14); **PER:** Interaction (12)
 Plus 25 points of science skills and 10 points of language skills.

Description: Neopus scientists are the brains of the invasion force. They are always found in groups and always working on raising engineered organisms or studying the local flora and fauna. They appear to be normal octopi with a arm diameter of 3.5 meters. Like all neopus, they have an amazing ability to change texture and color. Unfortunately for them, this does not work within a wet suit. The wet suit itself looks just like the skin of the neopus, but is always brown in color.

Encounter: Scientists will not engage in combat unless forced to. They, and worker managers, are the only ones that attempt to communicate with outsiders (usually with several soldiers nearby to protect them.)

Neopus Worker Game Data

STR 10 (d4+8) INT 9 (d6+6)
 DEX 6 (d4+4) WIL 10 (d4+8)
 CON 7 (d6+4) PER 11 (d4+9)
 Durability: 7/7/4/4 Action Check 10+/9/4/2
 Movement: walk 4 swim 6 # of actions 2
 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts 2
 Mutations: Gills, Night Vision, regeneration (4 pt), Directional Sense
 Flaws: Diminished Senses, slight (due to suit),
 Environmental Sensitivity, extreme (air)
 Perk: Alien Mindset (+2 vs. encounter skills with other species))

Attacks

Tentacles 11/5/2 d0 LI/O Personal d4s/d4+2s/d4+4s
 Spear 11/5/2 d0 LI/O Personal d4w/d4+2w/d4m

Defenses

-1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 +0(+2) INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 +0(+2) WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 Armor (skin): d4 (LI), d4-3 (HI), d4-2 (En)
 Armor (suit): d6-3 (LI), d4-2 (HI), d4-2 (En)

Skills

STR: Armor operation (10)-*wet suit* (16); Athletics (10)-*climb* (13);
 Melee weapons (10)-*blade*(11); Unarmed attack (10)-*brawl* (11);
DEX: Stealth(6)-*hide*(14); **CON:** Movement (7)-*swim* (15);
INT: Knowledge (9)-*first aid*(12); **WIL:** Awareness (10)-*perception* (13);
PER: Interaction (11)

Description: Neopus workers are the backbone of the invasion force. They are always found in groups and always working on building either the settlement or helping scientists raise engineered organisms. They appear to be normal octopi with a arm diameter of 4 meters. Like all neopus, they have an amazing ability to change texture and color. Unfortunately for them, this does not work within a wet suit. The wet suit itself looks just like the skin of the neopus, but is always brown in color.

Encounter: Unless resting or found in the middle of a settlement, workers always have short barbed spears for self defense. After striking with the spear they inflict d4w when tearing it out. When they encounter strangers, worker will contact the closest soldiers and their supervisor (add 4 ranks to all skills except hide and add technical knowledge- invention 2; repair 6.). They engage in combat only when forced to.

Neopus Soldier Game Data

STR 12 (d4+10) INT 7 (d6+4)
 DEX 10 (d4+8) WIL 10 (d4+8)
 CON 11 (d6+8) PER 11 (d4+9)
 Durability: 11/11/6/6 Action Check 12+/11/5/2
 Movement: walk 4 swim 6 # of actions 2
 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts 2
 Mutations: Gills, Night Vision, Regeneration (4 pt), Directional Sense, Adaptive Armor (unique)
 Flaws: Diminished Senses, slight (due to suit), Environmental Sensitivity, extreme (air)
 Perk: Alien Mindset (+2 vs. encounter skills with other species))

Attacks

Tentacles 20/10/5 d0 LI/O Personal d4+2s/d4+4s/d4w
 Spear 11/5/2 d0 LI/O Personal d4+1w/d4+3w/d4+1m

Defenses

+1 (+2 with melee weapons) resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +0(+2) INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 +0(+2) WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 Armor (skin): d6+1 (LI), d4 (HI), d4+1 (En)
 Armor (suit): d6 (LI), d4 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills

STR: Armor operation [12]-*wet suit* [20]; Athletics [12]-*climb* [16];
 Melee weapons [12]-*blade* [18]; Unarmed attack [12]-*brawl* [20];
DEX: Stealth [10]-*hide* [18]; **CON:** Movement [11]-*swim* [19];
INT: Knowledge [7] **WIL:** Awareness [10]-*perception* [15];
PER: Interaction [11]

Description: Neopus soldiers are the offensive arm of the invasion force. They both protect the workers and scientists and subdue the surface life that may cause harm to the invaders as a whole. They appear to be normal octopi with a arm diameter of 6 meters. Like all neopus, they have an amazing ability to change texture and color. Unfortunately for them, this does not work within a wet suit. The wet suit itself looks just like the skin of the neopus, but is always brown in color.

Encounter: Soldiers always are armed with long barbed spears. After striking with the spear they inflict d4+1w when tearing it out. Their skin and subcutaneous tissue acts as reactive armor (ie it hardens when struck). When they encounter strangers, they surround them and wait to see if they are hostile. If not they lead the strangers to the closest diplomat-scientist.

Neopus Ecological Data

Biome: Continental shelf

Encounter Chance: Common within .5 km (scientist), 2 km (worker), 20 km (soldier), Very Rare otherwise

Group Size: 2-6 (scientist), 4-16 (worker), 5-20 (soldier)

Organization: Group (scientist), Group (worker), Squad (soldier)

Intelligence: Sentient

Niche: Carnivore



PARA

-Paranormal Armed Response Agency-

by David Andrews • illustration by Chris Campbell

Mission Statement

PARA's mission is to investigate incidents and phenomena that are of a supernatural or extraterrestrial nature. Where such incidents are a threat to human life or United Kingdom interests, PARA is authorized to contain and neutralize the threat using any force necessary.

Agency Secrecy

As an agency that deals primarily in the supernatural, secrecy is of paramount concern to PARA. Should the public ever know of the depth of supernatural and extraterrestrial influence and corruption, all faith would be lost in public institutions. Because of this when on an investigation PARA provides agents with a cover identity. This cover is usually related to either law-enforcement or the media. Agents are instructed to do everything in their power to maintain their cover at all times.

In April, PARA security was compromised with catastrophic results. An explosion, initially thought to be a boiler explosion, destroyed the HQ and killed the majority of PARA employees including the entire research and support staff except for a few who were not in work. In an instant, over 30 years of investigation and research was lost. Back-ups of the computer data were usually stored off-site, but somehow someone got hold of the data and erased the backups after making copies for themselves.

Agency Facilities

"What they don't tell you about is the off-site Secure Vault where PARA keeps all its recovered artefacts. It's supposedly located in some remote Scottish mine. Agency Lore has it that they also keep captured entities alive in there. That was until it was cleaned out during the April disaster."

J. Harding

The Agency's headquarters are located in a small compound on the outskirts of London. Prior to the April explosion (see below), the compound consisted of a spacious, modern office building. 4 floors above ground and 3 below, HQ contained the in-house lab facilities.



The building also contained the agency's main training facility that comprised of a multi-purpose gym, an Olympic sized pool and firearms training range. A helicopter-landing pad was situated on the roof of the complex and allowed teams rapid access to the nearby international airports.

Since the destruction of the complex, the status of HQ has been in limbo. Currently, PARA operates out of a collection of temporary porta-cabins located on the old complexes car park.

Agent Requirements

With the loss of most of its agents in April, PARA is currently recruiting anyone it can find. Traditionally, PARA only recruited from government, military, law enforcement or scientific personnel. However, since the decimation of the agency's staff in April the agency has been recruiting from the civilian sector with increasing frequency. Basically anyone with skills that PARA deems useful or experience with the supernatural or extraterrestrial may be recruited. Regardless of where an agent is recruited from, he or she must meet a number of rigorous requirements:

- 1) UK or British Dependency citizenship. In certain cases, an exception will be made for those individuals from friendly nations.

- 2) Between the ages of 22 and 37.
- 3) Ability to attain Top-Secret clearance. PARA has been known to grant such clearance on a case-by-case basis for individuals whose backgrounds would normally prohibit.
- 4) Uncorrected vision not worse than 20/200, correctable to 20/20 in one eye and 20/40 in the other, and adequate colour and night vision.
- 5) Valid driver's license.
- 6) Good physical condition with no defects that would interfere in firearm use or defensive tactics.

Field agents are subject to annual medical and psychiatric evaluations and performance testing. Examinations are strongly recommended after any assignment that results in violent contact with a hazardous entity, technology or manifestation and may be mandatory at the discretion of the agent's supervisor.

Agent Benefits

Because of the dangerous line of work that field agents often find themselves in, PARA rewards them with a number of benefits. Firstly, the salary for a starting agent is £30,000 per year. Depending on seniority and experience this can rise to £75,000 or more. Medical costs for any injuries, both physical and psychological, sustained during an investigation are taken care of by the agency.

"Not that the pension plan sees much use!"

J. Harding

A substantial pension plan is also available for agents who reach retirement age.

Standard Agent Equipment

Upon joining the agency, every agent is assigned several pieces of equipment that help the agent in his investigations.

As a sidearm, the agent is assigned a FN FiveseveN pistol. The FN 57 is a semi-automatic pistol that uses

Fabrique National's proprietary 5.7mm round. This round, although small, packs the same stopping power as a 9mm parabellum round. This weapon was chosen as the agency's standard firearm due to its reliability, safety and increased ammunition capacity. The FN57 has a magazine capacity of 20 rounds, compared to the 9-15 of most pistols of its class. Mounting slots for a laser sight and silencer/suppressor are found on the weapon but these items are not assigned to the agent as standard.

All agents are also assigned a mobile phone that combines cellular phone and PDA technology. An integrated digital camera is included, capable of capturing both video and still images. The unit, which is not much bigger than a normal mobile phone, is connected to PARA-Net, a private cell phone network operated by the agency. The network features start of the art encryption and wireless network access.

Agents are also assigned a vehicle should they not own one when they join. This is usually a standard, middle of the road car. The agency sometimes supplies motorcycles instead of cars if the agent's preferences are in that direction. Regardless of what vehicle is assigned to them, it is under the explicit understanding that said vehicle is returned to the agency if the agent ever leaves its employ.

Overseas Duty

"Despite the restrictions placed on PARA, the agency regularly sends agents on missions abroad. This is a touchy subject in the cabinet, but they turn a blind eye."

J. Harding

PARA currently has no jurisdiction beyond the borders of UK territory. In fact, the United States has expressly forbidden PARA from operating inside US borders or interfering with US interests and investigations following the incident in 1985 (see below).

A Brief History of the Agency

July 1967: The British government founds the Agency after the Prime Minister becomes the target of an attempted assassination by a cult.

August 1972: PARA begins to liaise with an American agency. This agency is involved in the same area of investigation as PARA. The two agencies quickly become partners and an agency exchange program is developed. However, what started as a friendly rivalry begins to sour in the early 80's.

December 1980: An alien vessel is sighted in Rendelsham forest near 2 RAF bases and one USAF Base. PARA is dispatched to investigate. Two nights later the UFO is spotted over flying one of the airbases. High power scanning beams are detected aimed at several buildings housing top-secret materials. Citing national security, PARA agents deploy a Mk IV EMP Beam, successfully driving the UFO off.

January 1985: Operatives working in the USA are forced to destroy a small mountain community in order to contain a viral agent capable of animating dead tissue. The incident marks the end of US/UK cooperation in supernatural and extraterrestrial affairs.

September 2001: The Agency is thrown into turmoil when its precogs fail to predict the terrorist attacks in the United States. Government ministers begin to question its effectiveness as an organization.

November 2001: Citing the increasing unreliability of precogs, central government orders PARA to close the Precog division.

December 2001: PARA reaches its height with over 150 Agents.

April 2002: An explosion rips through the headquarters of PARA. 96 Staff members are killed in the blast and the subsequent inferno. Two

days later the director, who was not at HQ during the explosion is gunned down in front of his home in the early hours of the morning. As the emergency services begin sifting through the debris, the government orders all PARA operations to be placed on hold while an inquiry is held into the incident. This places the entire agency on hiatus. Many of its agents are transferred to other organizations.

October 2002: PARA finally receives the permission from Central Government to begin rebuilding the agency.

PARA Today

Today PARA is a shadow of its former self, its facilities destroyed, its staff decimated and its budget slashed. Lesser agencies would have withered and died. Not PARA though.

While the ruins of its former headquarters are demolished and new ones built, the agency operates out of a collection of porta-cabins located in the compounds car park. Each cabin is dedicated to a single function:

Cabin 1: Handles the demolition of the ruins and the reconstruction of the HQ.

Cabin 2: Central Services, handles the assignment of missions and agents.

Cabin 3: Briefing Room, does exactly what it says on the tin.

Cabin 4: Technical Services, handles repairs of equipment and evaluates new equipment.

Cabins 5-7: Analysis. These three cabins handle any scientific investigations of evidence gathered by field agents.

Cabins 8-9: Administration. These two cabins are a pair of rather spacious office suites where agents can write reports.

Cabin 10: Directors office.

Cabin 11-12: Bunk Rooms. These two cabins are mixed “barracks-style” sleeping areas for agents working overnight.

There are also three cabins that have been buried under several feet of soil and concrete. This was done because

these cabins required special security arrangements:

Cabin A: Main Network Server. This cabin contains all the computer hardware used to maintain PARA’s computer LAN and WAN. Also here is the main controlling hub for PARA-NET.

Cabin B: Armoury and Firearms Training Range.

Cabin C: Secure Storage. Cabin used to temporarily store artefacts awaiting transportation to The Vault.

In total, PARA employees roughly 20-30 agents on a full time basis. The agency also works with an undisclosed number of civilian experts whose knowledge and cooperation is essential but who do not wish to join the agency.

Plot Hooks and Questions

This section deals with some of the questions posed by the above timeline and information. Each question has one or two possible answers.

The American Agency – Just why did relations between PARA and the Americans sour?

Answer 1: The two agencies were competing for the same technologies and artefacts. It was inevitable that the friendly competition would turn into a bitter rivalry.

Answer 2: The American agency became compromised by the very entities that they were fighting against. Although PARA never found this out, it was viewed as a threat by the entities and thus relations were severed with PARA.

Answer 3: Politics. There was nothing sinister about the split. PARA is an investigative agency while the American agency was more proactive. The split was mutually agreed upon and allowed each agency to go their own way.

Failure of the Precogs – In November the Precog division of PARA was shutdown due to the increasing unreliability of their predictions. What caused this deterioration in reliability?

Answer 1: Some force is affecting precogs worldwide decreasing the effectiveness of their powers. Perhaps the origins of this force are natural, or perhaps it has a more mystical explanation.

Answer 2: (Borrowed from GURPS) Things are happening too fast. More and more events and atrocities are occurring at an ever-accelerating pace. It has long been part of the lore of the psychic underground that beyond a certain point in history, precognitive powers failed. Before that point, there was too much death and destruction to get a clear picture. We are rapidly approaching that date, and the precogs know it.

The Explosion – How did PARA’s security become so catastrophically compromised? Who was behind the explosion?

Answer 1: Whoever caused the explosion most have had detailed knowledge of the compounds security. Given this, it was likely an inside job, possibly an agent that had turned to “the other side”.

Answer 2: No one. The explosion was an accident. But the agency has become so paranoid that it believes someone was behind it. If true, then the emptying of the Vault and theft of computer data was not connected to the explosion.

Answer 3: The Americans. In the years leading up to April 2002, the competition between the two agencies began to get fierce. However PARA came out on top. While it may not have been the largest agency of its type, it was the best-informed and most capable agency. The American agency (which by this point was all but a rouge agency) decided to “set things right” by destroying PARA and stealing its research materials and data.

The Vault – What did PARA store there? Who stole the contents of the Vault?

Answer 1: Agency lore is correct. Several entities were captured and kept here. Exactly what these entities were is unknown. What is known is that when the bomb was detonated at HQ, the entities simultaneously engineered an escape from the Vault.

Answer 2: A rival group managed to infiltrate PARA and gain access to the security codes for the Vault.

Answer 3: Before the theft, the Vault had the largest store of genuine Occult literature outside of the Vatican. Some of the books were so dangerous that the Vatican itself engineered the theft in order to destroy the blasphemous tomes.

Adapting to other Game Systems/Settings

"We keep hearing stories about something called Aegis and Delta Green. Every now and then we also get rumours of an outfit calling itself the "Hoffman Institute". All I can say is thank God for the American disinformation machine. If it wasn't for the overwhelming presence of the USA in the conspiracy literature, I'm sure European organizations like us would have been discovered long ago."

J. Harding

PARA was originally written for a *Spycraft* campaign that was never ran. When I came to run a *Call of Cthulu d20* campaign several months later, I resurrected PARA. However, in the journey from Supernatural Taskforce to Mythos Investigation Agency, several things changed. Most notably the April incident was added to reduce the amount of resources available to the characters and the agency and bring it inline with the *Call of Cthulu* atmosphere.

Despite this, an attempt has been made to present as generic a picture as possible of PARA in this article. Below are some notes on how PARA can be fitted into other game settings.

Conspiracy X

Although referred to many times, the American agency is not named. In a *Conspiracy X* campaign a referee has two choices regarding this. Either the American agency is just one of the many

US government agencies or it is Aegis itself. If it were Aegis then PARA would make an effective "nuisance" to Aegis efforts. However, if the April Incident never happened then PARA is much more powerful and effective and it could pose a real obstacle to Aegis operations. Alternatively, if played from PARA point-of-view, the agency could make for an effective replacement for Aegis in a UK centric campaign. With its new policy of recruiting individuals from wherever it can find them, and since it investigates the same sort of incidents, an interesting campaign could develop.

Dark Conspiracy

Unlike the other games, *Dark Conspiracy* takes place in a dark future as opposed to a Dark Present™. Consequently, some changes are needed. It is likely that in 2012, the Republic of Britain has some sort of taskforce that is tasked with combating the dark invasion. Fiddling with the dates given in the history of PARA, it is possible that the reason why PARA and its American counterpart parted was due to the American agency being compromised by a darkling.

All Flesh Must Be Eaten

In January 1985, the dead rose from their graves in a small Colorado town. This was a pivotal point in PARA's history. *All Flesh Must Be Eaten (AFMBE)* characters could be townspeople, PARA agents or American Agents who were caught in the '85 incident. Since this event dealt with zombies, *AFMBE* would be an ideal system to run a scenario based around this. Alternatively, if you combine the *AFMBE* and *Witchcraft* games, characters could play PARA agents without much modification to the Agency's background.

Delta Green

I'm not too familiar with this game line but it seems that Delta Green could be an excellent candidate for the American agency.

Dark Matter

In the world of Dark Matter, conspiracies are hiding around every corner. PARA is just one of many secret gov-

ernment agencies. That being said, it is not recommended that the American agency be the Hoffman Institute.

Hunter: the Reckoning

Unlike the previous games, characters in *Hunter: the Reckoning* are not usually members of a government agency. However, this does not stop them from being targeted by one. *Hunter: Wayward* establishes that the authorities are slowly becoming aware of the existence of the Imbued. While the supernatural entities of the *World of Darkness* are unaware, reports of a strange new terrorist group/cult are spreading in the law enforcement and intelligence community. PARA is just one of many organizations that have caught wind that there is "something" going on with these self-proclaimed "hunters". *First Contact* gives good advice on how to incorporate government agencies into *Hunter*.



SAGA OF BLADES

by Odysseas Dallas

Chapter 2: The Journey

THE sun bore down on the three young travelers, the path in front of them seemed never-ending as they trudged on, exhausted, and in the case of one member of the rag-tag trio, wounded. Nevertheless, they continued on despite the heat; rest while hunted is a luxury leading to death nearly as often as the lack of rest itself.

One face looked up at the blazing sun, quickly and instinctively looking back down. The face belonged to a young girl no older than eleven, and slightly betrayed its non-human descent. With a rather expressive sigh, the little girl asked anxiously, "When are we going to reach Maple Valley, Wolfie?"

Wolfie, whose appearance matched his name despite his diminutive stature, answered in a weary voice that echoed down the trail by the river. "Soon, Micaella, soon. Just hold on". This short question and even shorter answer had become a habit to these two, performed every day over the last few days. They had been heading for the village of Maple Valley, and even though it took a healthy man half a week to reach it from the monastery, they were far from healthy, so their speed was far from ideal. *Damn them Knights! Burn in hell, cowards!* thought Wolfie, nearly dragging his exhausted feet on the dusty trail.

Like every day, they rested for a little bit, sitting down to relieve their tired bones, to drink water from the nearby and (relatively) clean river, eat what measly food they had left, so that they could get up half an hour later and continue trudging towards Maple Valley. And that was what was expected to happen for this day as well, since they had all lost count, until young William pointed his finger in the distance and yelled "We're here!". Even though little could be normally seen from such a distance and with less-than-perfect conditions, neither Wolfie nor Micaella discredited the child's keen eyesight. So this time they pushed onward despite their exhaustion, hoping to end their journey once and for all. They even came close to running.

However, something didn't feel right to Wolfie as soon as they covered half the distance. His instincts kicked in, and his nose was tickled by the faint smell of fire. It didn't take long for his ears to hear the screams and gunshots clearly, or for his eyes to notice the blazing light of a myriad of lit fires around the little village, creating shadows as night was quickly falling. Something was obviously wrong in this picture.

"Stay here!" growled Wolfie as he drew his blade and proceeded forward after making sure his two charges were safely hidden on a tall, strong oak. *Must this always happen...?*, his mind wondered as he sprinted towards the gaping village gates. *No guards*, the young man assessed as he glanced around, not failing to notice the badly damaged gates, one of them half-broken, drooping over the ground. Growing even more worried as time passed, he made the decision and entered the village. As the shouts, yells, screams, and above all, gunshots, became recognizable, it finally dawned on him... *The Knights!*

Trusting his instincts, Wolfie led himself towards a dark alley. The town square could not be seen clearly, but he could hear a group of people arguing, one of which appeared to have a rather heavy voice. His decision to ignore the arguing saved his life as he turned to face another of those damned Knights, a rifle in his hands.

Grinning, the bastard wheeled to shoot at the young warrior, but was surprised to see the hairy man lunging and delivering a thrust at his abdomen. Of course, he wasn't even half as surprised as Wolfie himself, whose blade, which should have messily gutted his hated opponent, met with extremely strong resistance. *Armor. Plate armor*, he immediately thought. Fortunately, the dastardly Knight threw down his cursed firearm and drew his blade. Wolfie noted that the Knight was fresh and spry while he was exhausted and barely able to stand on his feet.

Forced on the defensive by his rested opponent's skilled (but mundane) strikes, Wolfie couldn't manage to outpace his opponent. So, one more time, he relied on his technique, rather than his physical talents, to get him out of there alive. For a few minutes they traded blows, each one parrying the other's attack with none getting an advantage to press. For a second time, Wolfie realized his muscles were about to betray him; and he didn't care as much for his own life as that of the two children. It was time to take a risk.

With a sound that was reminiscent of both a growl and a sigh, he feinted for the eyes and slashed horizontally at his opponent, intending to try the same trick twice. This time, however, luck was not on his side. Even though his feint had actually worked and the Knight wasn't skilled enough to parry the real attack, it went right through his defenses... and was stopped cold by the coward's armor. It was exact-

ly the chance that the Knight was looking for. The surprised Wolfie found out the cold truth that his trick didn't work as the Knight smashed his sword hilt into the young man's face, nearly knocking him unconscious. With a growl, Wolfie fell on the floor along with his weapon, too dazed to realize what was going on. Too dazed to notice the dastardly Knight raising his blade above the fallen body of his mutant enemy...

As well as too dazed to notice a large, furry object jumping over him and colliding with the now terrified Knight. Magyar landed squarely on top of the Knight, making sure the Knight's sword arm was out of the way and unable to defend. The two hundred kilograms of the mighty sasquatch was more than the Knight could bear, armored or not. In little time, bones could be heard cracking, a procedure aided generously by the vigorous shifting of weight on the poor victim and Magyar's heavy fists pounding on him.

After making sure that the hated Knight had been separated from the living, Magyar looked curiously upon the young mutant, lying down on the ground. In all of his days as a scavenger, the sasquatch had witnessed a bewildering variety of human mutations, but he never ceased to be amazed each time he encountered a new one. This particular mutant seemed to be similar to something else... an animal perhaps? Magyar shook his large head. It was no time for that; the Knights were still in town. Registering in his mind that the young mutant was still breathing, he easily picked him up and hoisted him in a corner. He'd have to tell the guards about him later.

Several hours later, Wolfie opened his tired eyes, his head swimming on his shoulders. Scratching it with a hand, he softly touched the large bruise on his forehead; if he hadn't lowered his head, the bastard've shattered his nose. *Eh well. He knocked me out anyway.* He tried to get up several times, managing to succeed finally, with the help of a nearby fallen plank. He limped towards his fallen sword, picked it up, and quickly sheathed it. Looking around, trying to identify his surroundings, it dawned on him. *The kids!*

He tried running, but he quickly resigned himself to a slow pace, because anything faster would disorient him completely. As he headed outside, he noticed that the destruction and pillaging had subsided; some townsfolk seemed to be walking around furiously, but paid little or no attention to him; they had to rebuilt their village. Such tragedies were common in this blasted world, and only the strongest survived. Nevertheless, he continued towards the gate, and he wasn't surprised at the lack of guards or its condition.

Leaving the town, he headed for the place he had left the two children earlier. It took him a while. He never had a good memory, and having a heavy object collide forcibly with your head isn't exactly categorized as a "memory enhancement procedure". Despite the odds, he finally found the oak. Looking up, he noticed two small figures up the tree, not moving. Worried, he yelled, and was satisfied


when the two woke up. "Get down you two. Danger's over", he informed them with a slightly doubtful sigh.

Making way towards the town center, he had ample chances to notice the valiant efforts of the townspeople to rebuild their town (as well as strip the dead Knights of their equipment and throw them outside the village), working like ants. The town square itself seemed to have seen some heavy fighting; the dead bodies of the Knights were still, after hours, placed on top of carts to be taken outside of town. The young man scanned the area for the person he was looking for, but his throbbing head was of little help. That was when he noticed a furry, huge creature walking towards them, scaring the two children enough so that they hid behind him. Steeling himself, despite the intimidating figure of the sasquatch, whom he identified as such even though he had seen none before, the young man gazed directly into the creature's eyes.

Magyar looked down upon the young man. He was somehow familiar... Of course! He finally remembered that he was supposed to send a guard or two to pick up the unconscious young mutant, but he was too preoccupied with rebuilding the town; a sasquatch's muscles are always of use. Facing the mutant with a wide, tusky grin, he greeted him.

Wolfie's surprise showed in his face, but he quickly regained his composure. Instinctively assessing the huge creature's strength before him, he hesitated for a moment. However, he set such thoughts aside and spoke: "Greetings. I am but a traveler. It seems though this isn't the best of mo-". The young man's greeting was interrupted as a man on the other side of the town square yelled "Magyar!". With a nod, the large creature hurried over to the man calling him.

Shaking his head, the three continued on, the children obviously relieved that the imposing figure of the sasquatch wasn't close to them. They walked over to a group of older people, who seemed to be having a calm discussion. Repeating the earlier greeting, this time Wolfie wasn't interrupted. "Greetings, kind sirs. We are travelers. I am sorry for intruding at such a moment," (he shuddered at the thought that the Knights were in truth looking for the two mutants and stumbled on the poor village, venting their rage),"but I am looking for a certain gentleman named Tyron. Frank Tyron, I believe".

One of the younger members of that group, with cropped white hair and a thin, white moustache turned to the young man, slightly upset. "That would be me", was all he said. 

MINDWALKER'S TOY BOX

By Matthew R. Esch

PSI-PUZZLES were first described in Alternity terms in *Mindwalking: A Guide to Psionics* by J. D. Wiker. [TSR11384], on page 69. They are Progress Level 3 or higher items of varying forms and formats that grant the user 1 skill point towards a specific psionic specialty skill. The information presented here is to expand on the three paragraphs that comprise the description found in *Mindwalking*.

To gain the skill point that a psi-puzzle bestows, a complex skill check is required, using the broad skill in question to achieve. Anyone attempting to use a given psi-puzzle without the appropriate broad skill cannot activate the psi-puzzle. No more than one attempt per 1 day (24 hours) may be tried. Skills listed in blue are alien specific psionic powers that may

or may not be available, at the GM's option. Skills in italics cannot be used untrained. Where indicated, an adult version and a child version are listed, and a description will follow.

The skill check in question should be against the broad skill, and since no psionic broad skill can be used untrained, it follows that the user of the puzzle must possess the needed broad skill. Where possible, a specialty skill will have an associated puzzle. A listing of "N/A" is intended as "not available"; but individual GM's are free to expand upon this, using the guidelines of the puzzles already defined as guidelines. Also, special children's versions may exist, as outlined by the tables that follow.

Biokinetic Puzzles

Biokinesis (CON)	Adult	Child
bio-armor	Stun Cube	N/A
<i>heal</i>	Razor Fly	N/A
<i>smash</i> (weren)	Rhodan Crystal	Rhodan Crystal
transfer damage	Physician's Cross	"Sympathy Sue"/"Boo-Boo Ben"

Stun Cube: Generally the stun cube is not for children, though some older children & adolescents may possess. When activated, the cube hovers in mid-air, striking the user to inflict 1 stun (LI/O) when scoring a successful hit (10/5/2). Possessor/ activator gains the following adjustments to their DEX resistance modifier, depending on stun cube's quality. May be deactivated at will.

Marginal +2/Ordinary +1/
Good 0/Amazing -1

Razor Fly: Most psi-aware cultures would not allow children to use these. Appears as a mechanical fly, but leading edges of wings are razor-sharp. When activated the razor fly attacks the user, leaving superficial, yet blood drawing cuts with raking fly-by attacks. Fly attacks on 12/6/3, 1 action/ round,

Action check: Marginal/1; damage: 1 stun or 1 wound (LI/O) [see following]. Wound damage is only inflicted on an Amazing. Fly's attack score is adjusted based on quality. Deactivates after 4 total attacks and cannot be reactivated for 24 hours. The user then is left to attend the wounds psionically, and heals all damage received upon a successful skill check. After 12 successes, the puzzle is solved, benefit achieved & the puzzle is thereafter, useless.

Marginal 0/Ordinary +1/
Good +2/Amazing +3

Rhodan Crystals: Rare on Kurg, and unknown elsewhere, these naturally occurring geode-like crystal formations have an unknown crystalline structure that is sensitive to psionics. When the user makes the skill check required and

achieves 12 successes, the crystal morphs from its diamond-like shape to flat circular for a period of time, based on quality. This puzzle continues to function after benefit is achieved; though psion gains no further benefit.

Marginal 24 hours/Ordinary 1 hour/
Good 10 minutes/Amazing 1 minute

Physician's Cross: Appears as an iron necklace charm in the shape of a physician's cross. When complex skill check is completed, the charm automatically inflicts 1 wound (En/O) damage to the wearer. This completely bypasses any armor worn, including any and all cybernetic armors. Must be worn against the bare skin to work. There are no variations to this item



“Sympathy Sue”/ “Boo-Boo Ben”: Appears as a child's rag doll of specified gender, though invariably the doll is "sick" or "injured" [and variety of ailment may be depicted, the result is the same]. The child is encouraged to "pretend real hard" to imagine how the doll must feel. When child succeeds the accompanying check, 1 stun (En/O) damage is inflicted automatically and then deactivates for a period of 24 hours. Otherwise, the doll inflicts 1 fatigue point of damage after 1 hour, then 1 fatigue point for every five minutes. Parents of young children everywhere rejoiced.

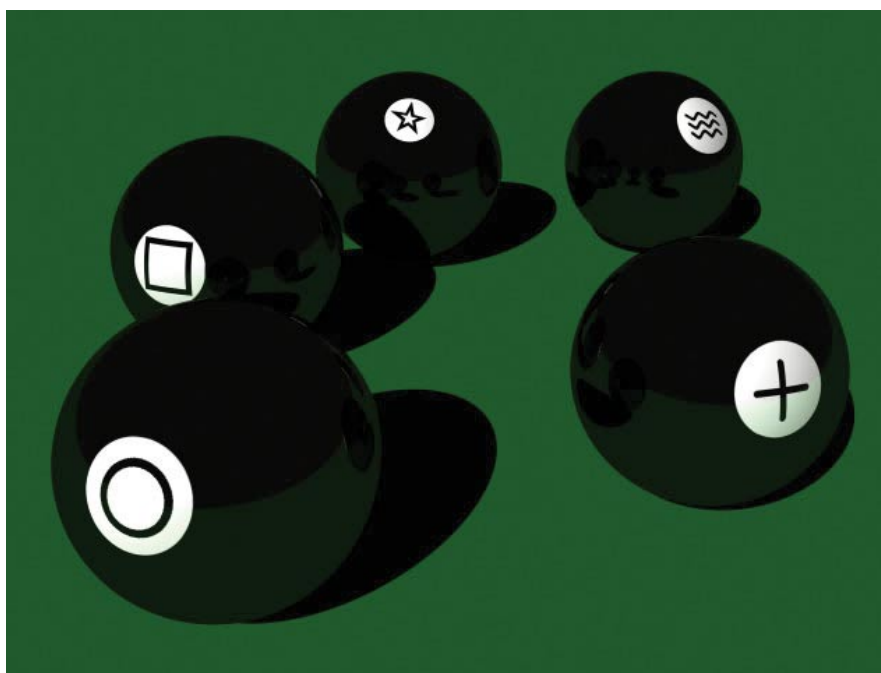
ESP Puzzles

ESP (INT)	Adult	Child
battle mind	"Threat" Orb	N/A or "Threat" Orb
mind reading	"8 ball"	"8 ball"
<i>navcognition</i>	Space Map Orb	Space Map Orb

“Threat” Orb: This semi-translucent, semi-opaque sphere, when activated, indicates number and approximate distance and direction of all possible "threats" in the area, even when not engaged in combat (i.e., sitting with friends). Each single "threat" is indicated by a different color, though colors/hues vary from use to use. The goal of the puzzle is for the user to be able to mentally picture the "display" before the display activates. The orb can check the mental image against its own findings for veracity, as determined by the die roll. Puzzle is "mastered" (and, therefore, forever useless afterwards) on 12 successes, at the listed penalty, based on quality.

Quality Penalty: Marginal +4/
Ordinary +3/Good +2/Amazing +1

“8” Ball: When not active, white spot is blank. User thinks of 1 of the target stimuli, as shown. Ball then reveals "it's" choice. Number of correct guesses is based on quality, and quality effects are cumulative (e.g., mastering a "Good" quality "8" ball renders "Marginal" & "Ordinary" useless).



Quality Successes needed:
Marginal 3/Ordinary 6/
Good 9/Amazing 12

Space Map Orb: By holding orb and concentrating for a number of minutes, based on quality, user gets a spatial "map" within their mindscape. The "map" is appropriate to scale needed, and provides user with own

location at point of origin. User can get bearing on a desired location with in appropriate scale and determine route for one location, once a day. The GM, at GM's option may overrule Player's die roll.

Quality Minutes needed: Marginal 30/
Ordinary 10/Good 5/Amazing 1

Psychoportation Puzzles

Psychoportation (WIL)	Adult	Child
<i>alter speed</i>	Photometer	Photometer
<i>timeslip</i>	Sohar's Pouch	Sohar's Pouch

Photometer: This is an ordinary photometer, a glass bulb with a wire axis & 4 square panes, one side black, the opposite, white. By holding or concentrating on the photometer within 3 meters, the user can engage the puzzle. The goal is to alter the vane's acceleration without physically adjusting the light. Number of successes needed to solve the puzzle varies by quality, as follows.

Quality Successes needed:
Marginal 12/ Ordinary 8/
Good 6/ Amazing 3

Sohar's Pouch: Any item less than 1 Kg placed within pouch timeslips, upon successful use, as per description of *timeslip* skill outlined on "Mindwalking", pages 23-24. Item re-materializes at the appointed time within the confines of the pouch.

Unlike other psi puzzles, this item continues to function after solved, but benefit is achieved after the given number of successes, based on puzzle quality.

Quality Successes needed:
Marginal 12/Ordinary 9/
Good 6/ Amazing 3

Telekinesis Puzzles

Telekinesis (WIL)	Adult	Child
<i>electrokinetics</i>	Tesla's Dynamo	Tesla's Nightlight
<i>kinetic blow</i>	Eh'Tel's Chime	N/A or Eh'Tel's Chime
<i>pyrokinetics</i>	Flash Rod	N/A or Flash Rod

Tesla's Dynamo/Nightlight: With each successful use of either puzzle, the dynamo/nightlight retains the charge generated by the psion. Either variation can be engaged by merely focusing and concentrating on the puzzle as long as the user is within 5 meters. In case of the dynamo, can recharge or power one powered item of personal equipment from *PHB*, or either *Star Drive* or *Dark Matter Arms & Equipment Guide*, as appropriate for the game setting, for an number of minutes, based on quality. The nightlight sheds light in a three-meter radius for an equal length of time. After 12 successes with either version, the benefit is achieved, but the device continues to function after being solved.

Quality Minutes Marginal 5/
Ordinary 10/Good 20/Amazing 60

Eh'Tel's Chime: This puzzle appears as a metal cylinder, with a clapper attached to springs within on both sealed ends. The user must not touch the puzzle to engage, but must remain within 2 meters. The puzzle is engaged and activated by mentally envisioning the clapper within and setting the clapper in motion. The Chime will only ring with successful use of the skill, but does not continue to function after the puzzle is solved. Benefit is achieved after the number of successes as dictated by the quality of the puzzle.

Quality Successes needed Marginal 12/
Ordinary 9/Good 6/Amazing 3

Flash Rod: This metal rod is open at one end, exposing a mixture of unknown composition. The properties of this mixture are psionically attuned and readily ignite when any sort of

telekinetic power is directed at it, from no further than 10 meters. Physical contact is not necessary. Upon successful skill check, the mixture ignites, functioning as a torch, shedding light in a 2-meter radius for 30 minutes. Benefit is achieved and the flash rod becomes useless based on the number of successes based on quality, as below.

	Quality Modifier	Successes Needed
Marginal	+2	12
Ordinary	+1	9
Good	0	6
Amazing	-1	3

Telepathy Puzzles

Telepathy (PER)	Adult	Child
<i>datalink</i>	Mind Modem	Mind Modem
empathic projection	Transference Cube	Transference Cube
illusion	Mind's eye	Mind's eye
<i>subdual (mechalus)</i>	Rage Rover	Rage Rover
suggest	Transference Cube	N/A or Transference Cube

Mind Modem: This small, black, box-like device is worn strapped on the user's forehead and can send/receive user's brainwaves to a linked computer. The exact manner of link to the computer in question is at GM's discretion, be it hard-wire or remote, as appropriate to the Progress Level of the setting. The goal of the puzzle is to have computer display either an image or brief text with out any other input. Regardless of quality, 8 successes are needed, however the modifier to the check is based on the quality of the puzzle. Naturally, societies and cultures that are not advanced to the point of developing computer technology will NOT have this device at their disposal.

Quality Modifier: Marginal +3/
Ordinary +2/Good +1/Amazing 0

Transference Cube: This nondescript black cube helps to facilitate the learning of not one, but two separate skills. The example given on p. 69 of *Mindwalking* is the goal in the case of *empathic projection*, whereas *suggest* varies somewhat. The user holds the cube within his/her hands, and combines an emotion (though not necessarily one either the user or the target is currently feeling) and a mental image of user's choice. The target, when successful will receive both the

image and a slight sense of the emotion. Alternatively, the user combines a command with a mental image [i.e., "sit" with the image of a chair], and the target is free to comply or ignore the command. Either way, the user will automatically know of the success or failure at each attempt. The puzzle is mastered in either capacity in 8 successes, with a modifier applied, based on quality. However, once a single puzzle is mastered in one capacity, that specific puzzle cannot be used again in the other capacity, though a second puzzle can be obtained, if desired.

Quality Modifier: Marginal +2/
Ordinary +1/Good 0/Amazing -1

Mind's Eye: This clear glass globe, 10 cm in diameter, reacts to psionic impressions, specifically, telepathy directed at it. The user holds the globe within his/her hands and concentrates on a mental image of his/her choosing. When used successfully, the mental image the user desires will appear within the globe, though the clarity will vary by success. For a brief breakdown, Marginal-very blurred, fuzzy lines; Ordinary- more in focus, though not particularly vivid; Good-sharp, crystal-clear image, high resolution; Amazing- as Good, and if desired, image can be a brief, 20 second "video", with multiple points of

view. The puzzle is mastered after 6 successes with the following modifiers in place, based on quality.

Quality Modifier: Marginal +4/
Ordinary +3/Good +2/Amazing +1

Rage Rover: The mechalus generally see no qualm about having their older children use this puzzle, owing to their collective sense of doing what's good for the betterment of mechalus society. This small electronic device appears as a rectangular solid with wheels or treads, as desired. When active, the rage rover operates much like a remote-controlled toy, but with one significant difference: there's no controller. The task is to halt the device, as it increases in speed and recklessness. The user must remain within 20 meters to attempt to control the rover's movements or to halt movement entirely. After 10 minutes, or if user is successful, the device powers down, and will not reactivate for 24 hours. This puzzle continues to operate after the benefit is achieved, but user gains no further benefit. Puzzle is solved in 12 successful checks, with following modifiers based on quality.

Quality Modifier: Marginal +1/
Ordinary 0/Good -1/Amazing -2



Telepath SCM Template

by Matthew R. Esch

The telepath has a mix of Mindwalker and Free Agent qualities. His abilities serve many functions; he can be a psionic communications specialist, providing mental links by which distant agents can keep in touch. With the ESP skill, he can become an effective spy, bounty hunter, tracker, or investigator. Taking Telekinesis increases his offensive and defensive skills, making him a formidable soldier, assassin, or security operative.

Telepaths tend to shun mundane skills, referring to rely on their psionic abilities to get the job done.

Human Telepath

	M	O	G	A
STR	8	9	10	11
DEX	8	9	10	11
CON	9	10	10	11
INT	9	10	11	12
WIL	10	11	12	13
PER	10	11	13	14
Action Check	9/4/2	9/4/2	11/5/2	12/6/3
# of Actions	2	2	2	3
Psionic Energy Points	10	11	12	13

Marginal Skills: Athletics; Vehicle Operation; Stamina; Knowledge; Awareness; Resolve; Interaction; Telepathy-contact, illusion, mind blast, suggest.

Ordinary Skills: Athletics; Vehicle Operation; Stamina; Knowledge; Awareness-intuition, perception; Resolve-mental; Interaction; ESP-mind reading; Telepathy-contact 2, illusion 2, mind blast 2, mind shield, psychic armor, suggest 2

Good Skills: Athletics; Melee Weapons; Vehicle Operation; Stamina; Knowledge; Awareness-intuition 2, perception; Resolve-mental 3; Interaction-charm; ESP-clairvoyance, clairaudience; mind reading 3, precognition 2, sensitivity 3 Telekinesis-kinetic shield; Telepathy-contact 4, illusion 3; mind blast 4, mind shield 2; suggest 4, psychic armor 2, tire 3

Amazing Skills: Athletics; Melee Weapons; Vehicle Operation; Stamina-endurance; Knowledge; Awareness-intuition 4, perception 2; Resolve-mental 4; Interaction-charm 3; ESP-clairvoyance 2, clairaudience 2; mind reading 3, precognition 4, sensitivity 3 Telekinesis-kinetic shield 2, psychokinetics; Telepathy-contact 6, illusion 4; mind blast 5, mind shield 3; suggest 7, psychic armor 3, tire 4

Equipment: casual dress, personal radio, combat knife.

Fraal Telepath

	M	O	G	A
STR	7	7	8	9
DEX	7	7	8	9
CON	7	7	8	8
INT	10	12	13	14
WIL	11	13	14	16
PER	12	14	15	16
Action Check	9/4/2	10/5/2	11/5/2	12/6/3
# of Actions	2	2	2	3
Psionic Energy Points	16	19	21	24

Marginal Skills: Vehicle Operation; Knowledge; Awareness; Resolve-mental; Interaction; Telepathy-contact 2, illusion, mind blast, suggest.

Ordinary Skills: Vehicle Operation; Knowledge; Awareness-intuition, perception; Resolve-mental 2; Interaction; ESP-mind reading; Telepathy-contact 2, illusion 2, mind blast 2, mind shield, psychic armor, suggest 2

Good Skills: Melee Weapons; Vehicle Operation; Knowledge; Awareness-intuition 2, perception; Resolve-mental 4; Interaction-charm; ESP-clairvoyance, clairaudience; mind reading 3, precognition 2, sensitivity 3 Telekinesis-kinetic shield; Telepathy-contact 5, illusion 3; mind blast 4, mind shield 2; suggest 4, psychic armor 2, tire 3

Amazing Skills: Melee Weapons; Vehicle Operation; Knowledge; Awareness-intuition 4, perception 2; Resolve-mental 5; Interaction-charm 3; ESP-clairvoyance 2, clairaudience 2; mind reading 3, precognition 4, sensitivity 3 Telekinesis-kinetic shield 2, psychokinetics; Telepathy-contact 7, illusion 4; mind blast 5, mind shield 3; suggest 7, psychic armor 3, tire 4

Equipment: casual dress, personal radio, combat knife.

Melee Weapons Skill

by **Odysseas Dallas**

THESE has been a lot of discussion in the forums and chatrooms between RPG fans, since the dawn of RPGs, considering the vital issue of weapons. And an often overlooked (or over-elaborated -depends on the RPG) part of the whole weapons issue happens to be melee weapons. How is it best to deal with them? A question that has risen many a time, when playing nearly any RPG, and in our case, *Alternity*. (If you or nearly everyone else you know has no problem with your RPG when it comes to the skills for melee weapons, then this is not *Alternity* we're talking about. In that case, feel free to drop that hideous RPG you were playing and start your wondrous new life with *Alternity*.)

Kidding aside, however, many are baffled by the sheer simplicity of the skills for Melee Weapons in *Alternity*. Just two (or three, if you have not already made the very wise decision of ignoring the *powered weapon* skill) skills for all the kind of weapons available? Indeed, many crave more elaboration, but also dislike having dozens of skills for all the weapons available. However, despair no more, for the Last Resort crew (ok, me) has created a revised version of the Melee Weapons skill, which not only offers variety without resulting to overly complicated methods, but is also extremely modular! In other ways, the Golden Rule of Role Playing has never been as easy to apply.

But to be able to start using these rules, the foundations ought to be laid in order for the reader to understand better. First of all, from now on we will follow certain guidelines; there are three types of categories available for weapons, and these are the Main Category (The general category of similar weapons, such as Large Blades, Polearms etc), the Secondary Category (A more specific category of more closely related weapons, such as European Warswords, Piercing Polearms, etc) and the Tertiary Category

(Which includes an individual type of weapon, such as the Broad Sword, the Spear, Trident, etc). All the weapons are listed in their respective categories (e.g. The Broad Sword is under European War Swords, which is under Large Blades). You can see all of the categories in the weapons table provided, alphabetically listed. Also, note that they are also under the skill they (normally) belong to, whether *blade* or *bludgeon*.

Weapons Table

The Weapons Table on page 36 becomes rather indispensable if you plan to use the revised rules, since two new aspects come into play. Note that these are not rank benefits per se, but they can be if desired.

Familiarity

First and foremost is the aspect of Familiarity with a weapon. To establish this rule modification we must tinker with the Melee Weapons broad skill and its corresponding specialty skills. The following paragraph gives an overview of this restructuring.

A character who takes the Melee Weapons broad skill is able to use both Blade and Bludgeon weapons at a +1 penalty (Under these rules *powered weapons* is no longer a separate skill and those weapons associated with that skill are distributed between *blade* and *bludgeon*). If a hero purchases a rank in one of the specialty skills (*blade* or *bludgeon*) he still maintains the +1 penalty but now adds the rank to his skill score as normal with *Alternity* rules. To eliminate this penalty a hero must pay a one-time cost to gain Familiarity with a category of weapons. Usually this is a Secondary Category but a GM may allow a purchase of Familiarity with a Main Category and all of its Secondaries at a higher rate. This achievement point cost is listed on the Weapons Table, pg 36.

Other Familiarity Options

-A GM may rule that if the wielder has no familiarity with any Secondary Category from a Main Category, then he may use no more than half of his ranks in the respective skill, rounding down.

-Familiarity with Tertiary Categories may also be allowed by the GM at a cost of 1 (or 2 points for very difficult weapons).

-At the GM's discretion, a starting character with a Melee Weapon specialty skill may be given free Familiarity with a Secondary Category of his choice, which fits with the concept of his character.

Specialization

We also have the aspect of Specialization. This is exactly what you have been thinking... those unwashed Combat Specs aren't the only ones to get the bonus! By spending an amount of skill points, the would-be warrior may gain a -1 base bonus for Specialization in a single weapon or, if the GM allows, a Secondary Category of weapons. The character may choose to Specialize with a Tertiary weapon at the cost of 3-5 skill points, depending on how hard it is to learn to use the weapon effectively. If allowed the hero may also choose to pay as little as double to as much as triple the cost of Familiarity to Specialize in a specific Secondary Category. Specialization here involves spending countless hours with your favorite weapon(s), learning the ins and outs, the pluses and minuses, how it responds when swung in a particular way, etc. Also it is required for a character to have at least 3 (or 4, depending on the GM) ranks in the respective skill. For the free specialization that all Combat Specs receive, it depends on the GM whether to grant it even if the character doesn't have 3 ranks in the respective skill. The hero could possibly trade it off for a Familiarity or two with other categories.

Weapons Table

Blade

Axes & Picks (5)

Axes (3)

0-g Axe
Battle Axe
Great Axe
Hand Axe

Chain Axes (2)

Chain Axe

Picks (2)

Battle Pick
Kama

Fist Loads *

Protruding Blades (1)

Dagger-fist
Stake

Large Blades (9)

Chain Swords (3)

Chainsword
Power Sword (Lighter Chainsword)

Contact Swords (4)

Filament Blade**
Power Sword (Early Starsword)
Starsword/Vibrosword

European Swords (3), Single-handed

Cut & Thrust Sword (Blade Length: 70-90 cm)***
Broad Sword (Blade Length: 70-85 cm)***

European Swords (3), Two-handed

Long/War Sword (Blade Length: 75-115 cm)***
Two-handed Sword (Blade Length: 115+ cm)

Fencing/Thrusting Swords (3)

Epee
Foil
Rapier
Saber
Saber (Fencing)
Tuck

Oriental Swords (3)

Dai-Katana
No-Dachi

Medium Blades (7)

Arming/Combat Swords (3)

Arming/Combat Sword (Blade Length: 45-70 cm)
Hunting Sword
Ninja-To

Chopping & Slashing Swords (3)

Butterfly Sword
Cleaver
Cutlass
Falcatta
Falchion
Saber

Contact Blades (3)

Filament Blade**
Ion Blade
Ion Katana

Curved Swords (4)

Katana
Scimitar

Polearms (6)

Multi-Purpose Polearms (3)

Bec de Corbin
Guisarme
Lucern Hammer

Piercing Polearms (3)

Lance
Military Fork
Partisan
Pike
Ranseur
Spear
Spetum
Trident

Slashing Polearms (3)

Fauchard
Glaive
Halberd
Naginata
Pole Axe
Voulge

Special-Purpose Polearms (3)

Ketch-all Pole
Mancatcher

Small Blades (5)

Daggers & Stiletos (2)

Dagger
Hunting Knife
Stiletto

Short Swords (3)

Short Sword (Blade length: 20-45 cm)
Wakizashi

Contact Dagger (3)

Filament Blade**
Vibroddagger

Bludgeon

Blunt Weapons (4)

Clubs/Sticks (1)

Baton/Club
Escrima Stick

Oriental Bludgeons (3)

Sai (pronged, not bladed)
Tonfa

Power Batons (2)

Pulse Baton
Stun Baton

Fist Loads *

Gauntlets & Gloves (0)****

Brass Knuckles
Cestus/Gauntlet

Powered Gauntlets & Gloves (1)

Power Cestus
Power Gloves

Flexible Weapons (5)

Ball & Rod Weapons (3)

Flail
Morning Star

Lashing Weapons (3)

Chain
Garrote
Whip

Multi-section Weapons (3)

Nunchaku
Three-section Staff

Hammers & Maces

Hammers & Maces (3)

Gravmace
Gravmaul
Great Maul
Mace
Warhammer

Staves

Staves (2)

Quarterstaff
Half-Staff

* At the GM's discretion, the Unarmed Attack skills may be used instead.

** Depending on the length of the filament blade the wielder opts for. You may become familiar with the monofilament blade itself as a weapon for 2 skill points, and specialize in it for 5 skill points. See rules on either.

*** Cut & Thrust deals with swords that are equally good at thrusting as cutting. Broadsword, for the sake of simplicity, deals with all of the rest one-handed swords which are mostly geared towards slashing, whether they have a complex hilt or not. Longsword deals with swords that are used two-handed, but don't have blades longer than 115 cm, such as bastard swords (when used two-handed; for one-handed use cut & thrust), longswords, and other such weapons.

**** All characters are assumed to have familiarity with such simple weapons, regardless of the actual skill used.

The table presents a (barely) comprehensive list of weaponry types. Tertiary Categories may be added to the Secondary Categories where appropriate. Secondary Categories may be added as well if they do not fit any of the listed types.

Note: If the campaign is only using non-powered weapons or specific weapons native to an area, feel free to adjust the Main Category costs downward. As a rule of thumb take the highest Secondary Category cost and add 1 point each for the other Secondary Categories. For instance in a European Dark Ages campaign, Familiarity with all local Large Blades would now cost 5 points (cost of 3 for Euro Swords, single-handed plus 1 for Euro, two-handed and plus another 1 for Fencing/Thrusting swords). This assumes that a character who has spent the time to become Familiar with a type of weapon (Secondary Category) will find it easier to become experienced in related weapons.

Melee Weapons Rank Benefits

⊗ **Resistance modifier (Ranks 4, 8 and 12):** While using a melee weapon that the character has rank 4 in, his Strength resistance modifier improves by +1. This modifier improves to +2 when achieving rank 8, and may rise as high as +3, when the character achieves rank 12 in that skill. However, this increase cannot be combined with any other Strength resistance modifier increase offered by another skill. (i.e. If you have rank 4 at Blade and rank 4 at Power Martial Arts, you can enjoy the benefit of only one skill, which also depends if you fight with your sword or unarmed.)

▶ **Reaction Parry (Rank 4):** When a character reaches rank 4 in a specialty skill and is wielding the appropriate weapon, he may parry whenever an attack is made against him, regardless of the action check; this rank benefit, when used, takes up the next available action of the character.

▶ **Double Strike (Rank 6):** At rank 6, the character may make two attacks at once with the appropriate weapon. This double attack may be done against a single target, or two targets within 2m of the character. The player rolls one control die and two situation dice; the first situation die is the first attack, and incurs a +1 penalty in addition to all others, while the second situation die is the second attack and incurs an additional +2 step penalty. Both use a single control die.

▶ **Double Parry (Rank 6):** Similar to the Double Strike above, this rank benefit is used in a very similar way. The actual and only difference is that instead of attacking twice, the character may parry two incoming close-combat attacks. The first situation die suffers from a base +1 penalty, and the second one from a base +2 step penalty. Both use a single control die.

▶ **Multistrike (Rank 9):** At rank 9, the character is able to make 3 attacks in a single phase. These attacks can be directed at a single target, or divided among up to 2 other targets who are within 2m of the character. All three attacks use the same control die; the first one consists of the situation die plus a +1 penalty; the second one of the situation die and a +2 penalty, and the third one of a the situation die plus a +3 penalty.

▶ **Multi Parry (Rank 9):** Similar to the Double Parry above, this rank benefit is used in the same way, however, the character may parry three incoming close-combat attacks. The first situation die suffers from a base +1 penalty, and the second one from a base +2 step penalty, and the third one uses the situation die with a +3 penalty. All three use a single control die.

Example of Familiarity and Specialization

Sebastien the Brave starts play with the Melee Weapons broad skill. He can use both Blade and Blunt weapons at a +1 base penalty. Later Sebastien takes the *Melee Weapons-blade* specialty skill. He can now apply his skill rank to all weapons under the Blade category but maintains the +1 base penalty. He decides to become Familiar with the Secondary Category of European Swords, One-Handed (one-time cost of 3) to eliminate the penalty when using a cut and thrust sword or a broad sword. All other weapons under the Blade category maintain a +1 penalty but when Sebastien pulls out his trusty broadsword he is ready to go into battle without a handicap. After Sebastien reaches rank 3 in *Melee Weapons-blade* he decides to Specialize in the use of all European Swords, One-Handed (one-time cost of 6 at x2 Familiarity) gaining a -1 bonus to any attacks he makes with those weapons. If he would have Specialized in just the Tertiary Category of broad sword it would have just cost him 3 points.

New Rank Benefits

Of course, what would be a revised set of melee weapon rules without new rank benefits? Since we would not dare ignore such a course of action, there is a sidebar included with all Melee Weapons rank benefits, old and new alike, for your convenience. Also, note that the two aforementioned aspects, Familiarity and Specialization can be rank benefits themselves; see the respective paragraphs above if you are interested in using them as rank benefits. Optionally, you may substitute the Specialization aspect/rank benefit for the Weapon Mastery rank benefit in *Last Resort 1* (page 54), for a -3 bonus and rank 12 with a single weapon are slightly overpowered, in my opinion.

Melee Weapons Skill: Strength or Dexterity?

Finally, after many discussions on which ability to use for Melee Weapons, whether Strength or Dexterity, I present two approaches for the above methods. On the first and simpler approach, you may deem certain Secondary Categories of weapons which are either usable with Strength or Dexterity (or Dexterity alone, if you wish). Even though the skill is normally under strength, you use your Dexterity instead of your Strength to determine the ability score. As a side effect, the GM may rule that if a weapon is used with Dexterity instead of Strength, no additional damage for high Strength applies (but subtractions for low Strength do!). When using this option, the suggested Secondary Categories are: Fencing Weapons, Contact Swords, Contact Blades, Curved Swords, All Secondary Categories of the Short Blades Main Category, Lashing Weapons.

On the other hand, you may opt to have all Melee Weapons under the Dexterity ability (and possibly the Unarmed Attack skill as well). However, if you opt for such a decision, you are strongly advised to use the house rule for Weapon Encumbrance, as presented in the sidebar on page 38.

Weapon Encumbrance

All weapons have some weight and inertia, and those with higher Strength can swing them faster and easier than those with lower Strength. Note, however, that if you are using the normal rules where Strength determines ability scores for using Melee Weapons, this isn't necessary (but you may add it if you'd like to complicate things). However, if you are using Dexterity instead of Strength for the aforementioned purpose, I strongly advise you to use the following rule.

All weapons require a minimum Strength to use effectively, so weaker characters will have a hard time swinging that cool greatsword. For each two points (or one point, if the GM feels particularly nasty) of STR that a character has less than the required, a +1 penalty applies in addition to the accuracy modifier of the weapon (or you even might go as far as to say that the character must use two hands to swing a heavier weapon effectively, and that if he has more than 2 points of STR less than necessary, he may not even try to swing it). On the other hand, the GM may rule that for every one or two points of STR above the required, the accuracy modifier of the weapon is lessened by 1 step; this may

never, ever, provide a bonus. (That's why they gave big weapons to big people. Simple physics equations. No wait, they didn't have physics equations back then...).

Here's a list of some examples to help you assign minimum STR values:

Great Sword (Over 1,5m): 12-13 STR (Note: Such swords are not only extremely rare, but extremely unwieldy to begin with as well).

Flail: 12 STR

Two-handed Sword/Claymore/Chainsword: 11-12 STR

Bastard Sword/Warhammer: 10-11 STR

Large Sword: 8-9 STR

Medium Sword: 6-7 STR

Starsword: 4-5 STR

Dagger: Yeah, right. Who can't hold a dagger?

Also, if a weapon is specifically mentioned to need two hands to use effectively, and the character uses only one hand, increase the minimum STR requirement of the weapon by +2. Of course, this cannot happen with weapons such as polearms, or those that despite the strength of the character, they're too large to be swung with a single hand.

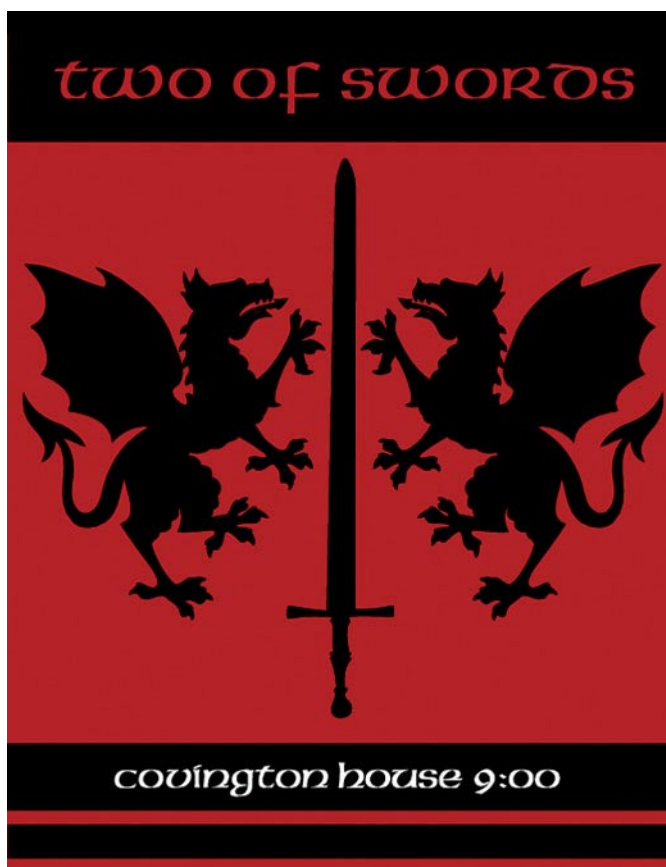
SIDEBAR: DARK MATTER GAME PROP

Bloodfight Club

A group of very rich, very bored, and very perverse millionaires have put together a gladiatorial fight club for their amusement. Agents of the group abduct homeless people, drifters and other unfortunates with little or no ties to society or family. They arm the abductees with melee weapons and then fight them in secret pit battles to the death. The millionaires are all highly trained combatants, adept at a variety of melee weapons such as swords and flails. So far no one has left the pits alive and the millionaires continue with their murderous ways.

While dining at a local restaurant the players overhear a new member of the millionaire fight club talking about the upcoming "bumsmack" to a friend. He hands the friend an invite to the club's activities that night and they leave the restaurant. The players notice that the careless friend has dropped the invite on the floor.

sidebar and art by Daryl Blasi



Sword Compendium, Vol 1 EUROPEAN ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL AND EARLY RENAISSANCE SWORDS

by Odysseas Dallas

FOR a while I have been thinking what has been missing from Alternity weapons... I pondered under the starry night sky (or so I supposed, it's not easy to determine if it has stars when all you see is light smog), and I came to the conclusion: Swords! Apart from the simple "types" of swords that exist, most of them Fantasy conversions and the like, there wasn't a list of swords that was unique. Swords with their own "personality", despite being nothing more than a blade of metal set upon a hilt, not magically or technologically enhanced or anything. Just swords, swords that could be found in our world, our mundane PL5 world.

The Sword Compendium series of articles for *Last Resort* will detail a set of swords for each Volume, starting with the first, which is European Medieval Swords (historical only). In this particular article I hope to detail a number of swords that can be found in our own world; nothing fictional. For the origin of these images (or if you're drooling over a particular sword), you may refer to the respective sidebar.

A note about the format: I will detail each weapon separately, each with description text and its own real image. The game stats for these swords are compiled in a table on page 40. None of these swords are, as I already mentioned, fictional. You may easily find them in our own dreary and bleak world. For ease of use, swords are categorized respective to their size: Small, Medium and Large, with blade lengths up to 20-45 cm, 45-70 cm and 80+ respectively (approximately). All Swords have an availability of Common [more due to their

Origin of Images

All images presented in this article are courtesy and copyright of Medieval Weapon Art (www.medievalweaponart.com) and Knight's Edge (www.knightsedge.com). Both are excellent sites which sell a large variety of swords, both decorative and functional. They can be reached at the aforementioned Internet addresses. I highly recommend both of them, and if you're really desperate for a free sword, you may enter Medieval Weapon Art's contest for a choice between free three items each month. And, it goes without saying that both companies' wares are of high quality and at reasonable prices.

rarity rather than any license]. Also, since this was written in concert with the Melee Weapons Revised Rules article, which can be found in this issue, in the Skill listing I write the Secondary & Tertiary Category of the weapon. I also omit the Clip Size/Cost, Type/Firepower and Range listings, which are rather useless. At the end of the description text I also include the technical characteristics of each sword, if they are available.

This, the first volume of the Sword Compendium, deals with swords from the ancient age to early Renaissance, before swords such as the rapier, the broadsword and the saber became dominant. However, it only covers European Swords, and those based on real designs, not fantasy.

Large Blades

14 th Century Cut & Thrust



This particular sword is a fine example of a Cut & Thrust sword. The blade is slim, intended for thrusting, but unlike many other cut & thrust swords with little or no edge, this one retains its cutting capabilities, though limited. Even though the vast majority of swords emphasized slashing (since the natural tendency of the arm is to swing and not to jab), the appearance of plate armor on the battlefield rendered slashing attacks nearly useless. Thrusting weapons, such as slim swords, were in use in order to find weak spots in the armor. This particular sword has a one-handed grip and a long, slim blade; it is a light and fast weapon.

Overall Length: 102,5 cm. Blade Length: 85 cm. Blade Width: 3,75 cm

Acre Sword



This simple, elegant long sword is typical of the Crusades. The Knightly Cruciform sword, as this type of swords is known, evolved from the Viking sword; since at the time of its making plate armor was unheard of while mail was common, and since most fighting was done from horseback, the ability to slash was more important. As a result, this blade was made with very little taper, so it may give more force to the blow. The name of the sword comes from the battle of Acre, during the Third Crusade, where Richard Lion Heart pressed his attack so strongly that the garrison surrendered. This particular design is a replica of a sword from a funeral brass of knight of that period.

Overall Length: 100,5 cm. Blade Length: 82,5 cm. Blade Width: 4,7cm

Swords

Weapon	Skill	Acc	Damage	Actions	Hide	Mass	Cost
LARGE BLADES							
14 th C. Cut & Thrust	EuroWarSword/Cut&Thrust Sword	-1	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	2	-	1.5	193
Acre Sword	EuroWarSword/Cut&Thrust Sword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	2	193
Arbedo Sword	EuroWarSword/Broad or Long Sword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	229
Broadsword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	2	193
Castillion Sword	Euro. War Sword/Cut & Thrust or Broad Sword or Long sword	-1(0)	d4+1w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	229
Classic Medieval Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	170
Crusader Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	2	182
Crusader's Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	233
Dark Age Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	223
Early Claymore	Euro. War Sword/Two-handed Sword	+1(0)	d6+1w/d6+2w/d4+1m	2	-	2.5	223
English Tuck	Fencing Swords/Tuck	0(+1)	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4-1m	2	-	1.5	233
European Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	173
Fighting two-hand Sword	Euro. War Sword/Two-handed Sword	+1(+2)	d6+1w/d8+1w/d6m	2	-	4	273
German Hand-And-A-Half	EuroWarSword/Broad or Long Sword	0	d4+1w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	2	263
<i>Landscknecht</i> Sword	Euro. War Sword/Two-handed Sword	+2(+3)	d8+1w/2d4+1w/d6+1m	2	-	8	273
German <i>Wald</i> Sword	EuroWarSword/Broad Sword	+1	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	2.5	170
Gothic Bastard Sword	Euro. War Sword/Cut & Thrust or Broad Sword or Long sword	-1	d4+1w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	277
Great Claymore Sword	Euro. War Sword/Two-handed Sword	+1(+2)	d6+1w/d8+1w/d4+1m	2	-	4.5	302
Guingate Sword	Euro. War Sword/Cut & Thrust or Broad Sword	0	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	2	-	1.5	274
High Renaissance Sword	Euro. War Sword/Cut & Thrust Sword	-1	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	2	-	1.5	274
Irish Hand-And-A-Half	Euro. War Sword/Cut & Thrust or Broad Sword or Long sword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	277
Irish Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	244
Irish Two-Hander	Euro. War Sword/Two-handed Sword	+1(0)	d6+1w/d6+2w/d4+1m	2	-	2.5	277
La Hire War Sword	Euro. War Sword/Cut & Thrust or Broad Sword or Long sword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	224
Late Norman Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	2	215
Medieval Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	173
Ravenna Sword	Euro. War Sword/Two-handed Sword	+1(0)	d6+1w/d6+2w/d4+1m	2	-	3	233
Sticklestad Viking Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	214
Sword on the Great Seal of Robert the Bruce	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	214
Towton Sword	Euro. War Sword/Cut & Thrust or Long sword	-1(0)	d4+1w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	1.5	243
Two Handed Great Sword	Euro. War Sword/Two-handed Sword	+1(+2)	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4+1m	2	-	5.5	315
Viking Chieftain Sword	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	+1(+2)	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	3.5	184
Viking Swrd-Double Edge	Euro. War Sword/Broadsword	+1	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	2.5	299
War Sword of Albrecht II	Euro. War Sword/ Cut & Thrust or Broadsword or Long sword	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m	2	-	2	242
Warbrand from the Maciejowski Bible	Euro. War Sword/ Cut & Thrust or Long sword	0	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	2	-	2	128
MEDIUM BLADES							
15th C.Italian Short Sword	Combat Swords/Combat Sword	0	d4w/d6w/d6+2w	3	+1	1.5	170
Celtic Combat Sword	Combat Swords/Combat Sword	0	d4w/d6w/d6+2w	3	+1	1.5	229
Falcatta	Chopping & Slashing Swords/Falcatta	0	d4w/d4+2w/d6+3w	3	+1	1.5	163
French Badelaire	Chopping & Slashing Swords/Falchion	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/2d4+1w	2	-	1.5	148
German Falchion	Chopping & Slashing Swords/Falchion	0	d4+2w/d6+2w/2d4+2w	2	-	1.5	173
Greek Hoplite Sword	Combat Swords/Combat Sword	0	d4w/d6w/d6+2w	3	+1	1.5	170
<i>Grosse Messer</i>	Chopping & Slashing Swords/Falchion*	0	d6w/d6+1w/d8+1w	2	-	2	184
Knights Round Table Swrd	Combat Swords/Combat Sword	+1(+2)	d4w/d6w/d6+2w	3	+1	3.5	184
<i>Landsknecht Katzbalger</i>	Combat Swords/Combat Sword	0	d4w/d6w/d6+2w	3	+1	1.5	185
LongHunterStagWood	Combat Swords/Hunting Sword	0	d4w/d6w/d6+2w	3	+1	1.5	244
Medieval Chopper	Chopping & Slashing Swords/Falchion*	0	d4+2w/d4+3w/d4m	2	-	2	184
MountTrapperStagHunt	Combat Swords/Hunting Sword	0	d4w/d4+1w/d6+2w	3	+1	1.5	254
Roman Gladius Sword	Combat Swords/Combat Sword	+1(+2)	d4w/d6w/d6+2w	3	+1	3	172
SMALL BLADES							
Coustille Sword	Short Swords/Short Sword	0	d4w/d4+1w/d6+1w	3	+1	1	170

Arbedo Sword



This very effective cutting weapon also has a deadly point, making it both a cutting and a thrusting weapon. The long grip enables it to be used either one handed or two handed *[If used two-handed, increase damage and actions per round by 1]*. Named after the battle of Arbedo, which took place in June 22, 1422 AD, between a Milanese army of 6,000 horsemen and 4,000 footmen, led by Carmagnola and Angelo de la Pergola, and an army of 4,000 Swiss pikemen and halberdiers. Since this was his first encounter with the Swiss, his cavalry was stopped cold by the long polearms of the Swiss. All of his horsemen dismounted and pressed on

with the help of the footmen, against the numerically inferior Swiss; one group of the Swiss tried to, unsuccessfully, surrender. In the middle of the battle, a group of Swiss foragers appeared in the scene; the Milanese thought they were enemy reinforcements and fell back to regroup, allowing the Swiss to retire in good order. Many Swiss men died at that battle, even though Carmagnola lost more men. This war sword was named after the particular battle, where either side could have carried it.

Overall Length: 98,5 cm. Blade Length: 77,5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Broadsword with Double Ring Guard



A highly effective sword with the necessary length and power, but with little increase in weight. An early form of the later broad sword, it is more akin to a long sword than to a broad sword, though the hilt is progressing towards the hilt of the broad sword. This 16th century weapon is proof to the changes that the knightly weapon underwent during the Renaissance; the plain cross hilt was enhanced with rings and hand guards as decoration but also as protection, since armor was no more commonly worn with it. Blades changed somewhat, becoming slightly thinner, but not nearly as much as the hilt itself. The blade of this particular sword was long and slim, but it remained a cutting weapon. This sword is a duplicate of an original such sword, in Hank's Collection, and probably of South German origins.

Overall Length: 115 cm. Blade Length: 90 cm. Blade Width: 2,5 cm

Castillion Sword

A weapon that combined the attributes of the long thrusting sword and the short cutting sword that were used during the 1400s, this weapon can be used easily one-handed, but the long pommel makes it a true hand & a half sword, so that it may be used two-handed as well *[increase damage and actions by 1, but at the discretion of the GM the accuracy bonus is lost since most of the second hand grips an uneven surface, the pommel, and not the hilt]*. This sword is a replica



of several swords that were found in a wooden chest at the bottom of the Dordogne, a French river; a little downstream is the town of Castillion, where the Hundred Years War was essentially ended, in July 1453. John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, led 6,000 men into a rash attack on the emplaced siege lines of the French. In the slaughter that followed, he and most of his men were slain by heavy artillery fire, followed by a strong mop-up attack of the French; this is the battle whose name this sword carries. A deadly, yet beautiful blade.

Overall Length: 103,75 cm. Blade Length: 85 cm. Blade Width: 4,5 cm. Blade Material: Well-

Tempered High Carbon Steel

Classic Medieval Sword



A simple sword design, which was in service throughout all of Europe for a long time. The blade has a long and wide fuller which decreases weight without compromising strength, making possible cuts both quick and powerful enough to cut through the mail or cloth armor that was worn during that era. The long guard protects from enemy shields and blades alike, whereas the elegant pommel balances the sword nicely.

Overall Length: 98,75 cm. Blade Length: 82,5 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm

Crusader Sword



Even though it has a shorter blade than the typical knightly sword, its design is closer to the long sword than the combat sword; it is slimmer than the average combat sword, even though it is still primarily a slashing weapon. A heirloom quality sword, it is nevertheless as functional as those in the Middle Ages. Designed to look similar to the weapons of the crusaders, it has a typical cross-guard and the crusader cross cast within the pommel. A step towards the advancement of the sword, it's a good blade, yet nothing more.

Overall Length: 90 cm. Blade Length: 70 cm. Blade Width: 3 cm

Crusader's Sword



As the previous sword, this sword bears resemblance to the blades used by the Crusaders during their wars in the "Holy Lands". The sword itself was typical of its era, and could easily cut through the mail armor that was common. The blade is flat, with two long fullers which lighten but do not weaken it. The flat blade can deliver a powerful and shearing cutting blow, but the sword has enough of a point to be used as a thrusting weapon if need be.

Overall Length: 99 cm. Blade Length: 82,5 cm. Blade Width: 4,7 cm

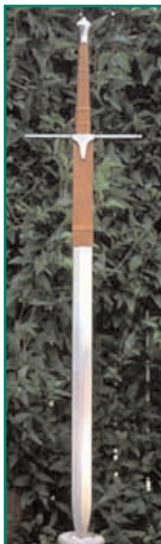
Dark Age Sword



This simple design was first made in the Dark Ages, and is the forerunner of the Viking, Saxon and Norman Swords. It was a true advancement. Until then, swords were limited to half a meter in length at most, since those that were manufactured with longer blades tended to fold during the battle, rendering them useless. This is a warrior's sword; it is a slashing weapon, and even though it is pointed, it saw little use in thrusting maneuvers. Its broad blade could deal a shearing blow to all but the heaviest armor. During the Dark Ages, the sword was man's best friend; wherever he went, so did it. This particular sword has a hand forged and well-tempered high carbon steel blade, and a one-piece cast brass grip, secured between the alternating steel and brass layers of the pommel and guard.

Overall Length: 93,75 cm. Blade Length: 77,5 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel.

Early Claymore



An early design of the later popular claymore, this impressive two-handed sword was typical of the battles during the period of William Wallace, who laid waste to several of the northern English counties during his challenge of Edward I. Those battles led to the culmination of Scottish nationalism and finally to their independence later under the banner of Robert the Bruce. This is the predecessor of the true two-handed claymore, with the characteristic downsloping guard that developed in late 15th century. This large sword has a long blade and a straight guard, more than capable of cleaving the Sassenach. *Note: Despite the sword's size, it's rather light, so you may choose to reduce the accuracy penalty to 0 for stronger characters (11+ STR).*

Overall Length: 147,5 cm. Blade Length: 115 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel.

English Tuck



Eventually, armor improved, so new weapons had to be utilized to counter it. Cutting weapons soon fell into misuse since they were inefficient against plate armor; heavy crushing and cleaving weapons such as maces and axes started appearing, who would either cleave through or crack the armor. Later, purely thrusting weapons were also introduced, which could split the rings of mail or find their way through the joints and crevices of plate armor; the most popular of them was the French *Estoc*, which is translated in English as Tuck. The Tuck is considered a forerunner of the rapier by many, whereas others claim it was the merging of

the civilian sword (Espada Ropera) with the longer, lighter and more effective tuck, that produced the rapier. The tuck was an effective weapon however, as its narrow, long, but rigid blade could be thrust with one hand, or even two hands *[add +1 point to damage and +1 penalty to accuracy, to reflect the difficulty of rebalancing after a hard thrust]*. However, it has very little cutting power.

Overall Length: 127 cm. Blade Length: 105 cm. Blade Width: 3 cm

European Sword



A balanced weapon, this is the kind of sword that a professional fighting man of the European Middle Ages would have chosen as his armament. It is a no-nonsense sword meant for a single purpose: combat. Even though the wheel pommel of the sword has a smaller radius, it makes up the weight for counterbalancing by being nearly 4 cm thick. The crossguard is not too long, but it is curved to protect the hand from an opponent's sliding shield or blade. The blade tapers to a good firm stabbing point, without compromising the width of the weapon and its ability for shearing cuts along its length. It is constructed from high-carbon steel, tempered to a very tough spring.

Overall Length: 100 cm. Blade Length: 85 cm.

Blade Width: 5 cm

Fighting Two-Hand Sword



A large man with such a sword was indeed impressive! This is a classic Swiss/German weapon, invented to aid the brawniest troopers to break enemy pikes. However, the sword had such an awe-inspiring appearance that it was soon used by guards in processions, and even adopted for personal combat. Many of these swords have wavy blades, or flamberge as they are known, which increase the intimidating factor of the weapon [and it was thought back then that they even increase the cutting power of the sword]. This particular blade has a flamberge blade and two spikes jutting from the beginning of the blade. *Note: This sword is particularly heavy. You may wish to impose an additional +1 penalty to accuracy if the wielder isn't strong enough (11+ STR).*

Overall Length: 155 cm. Blade Length: 118 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel.

German Hand-And-A-Half



As armor became stronger, the hand & a half sword become more popular. A development over the usual two-handed sword (or great sword), the hand & a half weapon was a one handed weapon that had a longer grip, enabling a two-handed hold. Most of them were so large as to actually require two hands, but this sword is an example of a true hand & a half weapon (*if used two handed, increase damage and actions per turn by +1 each*). Despite the size of the weapon, it is lightweight enough to be wielded one hand. It also comes with a flat blade, which accommodates parrying moves against an opponents blade; this particular sword also has side rings in the crossguard to prevent catastrophic hands to the hand.

The hand & a half sword was often used by cavalymen, like the long sword.

Overall Length: 120 cm. Blade Length: 95 cm. Blade Material: Tempered High Carbon Steel

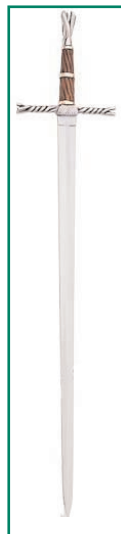
German Landsknecht Sword



An evolution over the great sword, this sword is unbelievably long and heavy. The size of an adult person (taller than an adult person, actually), this is a monster of a sword, used only by the strongest and brawniest Swiss and German troops. It's main purpose was breaking pikes and downing horsemen (and probably the horse alongside). This sword is a replica of an original German weapon, now in a private collection. It has a flamberge blade made from high carbon spring steel, well tempered and forged over hot coals. Even the guard is a masterpiece, hand worked and of circular shape, with joined rings at front and back along with swirled wrought iron side guards. *Note: This sword is ridiculously heavy. You may wish to impose an additional +1 penalty to accuracy if the wielder isn't strong enough (13+ STR), or +2 if he's lower than 11+ STR.*

Overall Length: 187,5 cm. Blade Length: 135 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel.

German Wald Sword



Styled from an actual German Medieval sword in a private collection. Swords such as this one were carried for hunting and protection throughout the forests ("Wald" in German). It is a one-handed sword, and an optimal weapon to use from horseback. This particular sword, even though sharpened and functional, is mostly meant for decoration, as can be seen from the hand-crafted twisted steel guard, segmented and etched rosewood grip with brass spacers. Another testament to the above statement is also the fact that this sword is unbelievably heavy for a sword of its size. It is unknown whether the original had the same weight, or if it's just the replica that is so heavy.

Overall Length: 98,75 cm. Blade Length: 82,5 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm

Gothic Bastard Sword



A replica of a true Gothic weapon as found in the Tower of London, this elegant sword with its slim blade is deadly. A popular sword often depicted in Durer's work, it has a wide enough blade for cutting and it is pointed enough to thrust with. The sword is light enough to be swung with a single hand, but the hilt is long enough to enable two handed use, increasing the force of blows without compromising its handling (*+1 to damage and actions*). A weapon from the 15th century, when Gothic style was at its apex, it reflects the vitality of the Gothic Approach.

Overall Length: 110 cm. Blade Length: 90 cm. Blade Width: 3,5 cm. Blade Material: Well-Tempered High Carbon Steel

Great Claymore Sword



A typical large claymore sword, as those used by the famous Scottish Highlanders. An impressive but rather heavy blade, this sword proves to be rather difficult to swing, especially for those without the necessary muscle, but it backs every one of its blows with bone-jarring power: Even parrying such a sword would result in a broken wrist. *Note: This sword is rather heavy, so you may choose to worsen accuracy to +2 unless wielded by stronger characters (11+ or 12+ STR).* *Overall Length: 147,5 cm. Blade Length: 112,5 cm. Blade Width: 5,6 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel.*

Guingate Sword



In 1479, King Louis of the French invaded the Netherlands, where he met on the field of battle with Emperor Maximilian, who was a known arms and armor lover (actually designing some armor that has his name) as well as being a man who loved battle.. The battle was short but bloody; even though the famous French Cavalry defeated the Imperial Horse, the field was held by the Flemish Infantry with the Emperor fighting on foot amidst its ranks. This sword was named in honor of that battle, and is styled from an original sword of the era. The blade is hand-forged from well tempered high carbon steel, and employs the high center ridge of the original. Thus, the strengthened blade is capable of either cutting or thrusting with equal efficiency. *Overall Length: 100 cm. Blade Length: 83 cm.*

High Renaissance Sword



During the Renaissance, it was realized that a thrusting weapon was far more efficient against the defenses of the day. Even though the cutting stroke was still an effective maneuver, a weapon's fine but strong point was needed to penetrate openings between armor pieces and separate mail. Thus, certain swordmakers thought highly of the thrust, a belief clearly envisioned on this sword, where all power is focused on the tip. Its slim, tapered blade is strengthened by a central ridge, enhancing its thrusting power. It can still be used for cutting, but obviously no effort is wasted in its design to make sure the thrust is the maneuver this weapon is suited for. *Overall Length: 102,5 cm. Blade Length: 85 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel*

Irish Hand-And-A-Half



The Irish were known to rely on speed and agility, and this blade is a beautiful and deadly example of the Irish fighting mind. A replica of a weapon dating from about 1500 AD, this well-proportioned hand & a half sword is characteristically Irish, with the flaring "S" guard and the ring pommel. The description of the sword can only begin to convey the speed, balance and feel of the weapon; it is light, quick, agile, deadly. It can be used either one- or two-handed [*increase damage by +1 and actions by +1*]. *Overall Length: 114 cm. Blade Length: 86,3 cm. Handle Material: Wood covered with leather. Blade Material: Well-Tempered High Carbon Steel*

Irish Sword



The Irish have developed one of the most distinctive pommel & crossguard combination of all medieval swords—a steel ring pommel and a flaring steel crossguard bent in opposite directions, forming an "S". This particular sword is a typical Irish warrior's armament, both light and strong, with a well-proportioned sword blade that comes with a fuller, lightening without decreasing its strength. A quick but powerful sword which enhanced the fighting reputation of Irish men.

Overall Length: 100 cm. Blade Length: 82,5 cm. Blade Width: 4 cm

Irish Two-Hander



The Gallowglass was the most feared Irish mercenary in medieval times; he would sell his swordsmanship in Ireland, Scotland, or even to the English if the pay was right. Always a few years behind in arms and armor development, the Irish still fought with sword, targe and mail when most of Europe had gone to plate. Nevertheless, they were equal in valor to anyone else. One of their favorite weapons was a large two-handed sword, their equivalent of the more well-known Scottish claymore. However, as the Scottish had their distinctive crossguard, so did the Irish have their flared, "S"-shaped crossguard and a ring pommel, open faced so that the tang of the blade could be seen. *Note: Despite the weapon's size, it is surprisingly rather light; you may wish to ignore the +1 accuracy penalty for strong (11+ STR) characters.*

Overall Length: 136,25 cm. Blade Length: 105 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm

La Hire War Sword



Named after Estienne La Hire, one of the toughest and most warlike of the captains under Jeanne d'Arc. A professional soldier of some repute, La Hire was not only present in the lifting of the siege of Orleans, but also the primary leader at the Battle of Patay. Even though by that time plate armor had made swords ineffective against knights, they were still effective against the lesser armored foot troops. This magnificent war sword, which can be wielded one- or two-handed [*increase damage and actions by +1*], is the type of sword he might have carried in battle.

Late Norman Sword



This superb fighting weapon is well balanced and strong enough to deliver shearing blows, with a long fuller running nearly all of the blade, lightening but without compromising its strength. Constructed to be effective against mounted and foot troops alike, this Norman sword is slightly larger than the ones carried strictly by infantry. The medieval Knight was a cavalryman, charging first with lance and following with sword to quell any and all armed resistance. This particular weapon has little taper and is meant to be used as a cutting weapon from horseback.

Overall Length: 100 cm. Blade Length: 85 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm. Handle Material: Wood grip covered with leather and wrapped with

wire. Guard and brazil nut pommel are steel. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Medieval Sword



This particular replica is not a copy of an original sword; instead, it's an extremely general weapon, what would be termed as a "medieval sword" as its name implies. Forged to fit everyone's need for a multi-period, multi-cultural sidearm, this sword has a classic medieval style and shape, which could be used from as early as the Viking Age to as late as the 1500s. Technically, it's a light and well-balanced sword, with a fuller running the length of the blade, which has a serviceable point but no taper. It is primarily a slashing weapon, with thrusting maneuvers being always a second option.

Overall Length: 92,5 cm. Blade Length: 77,8 cm. Blade Width: 3,3 cm.

Ravenna Sword



During the Renaissance, the only sword that survived "intact" was the two-handed; The rapier, saber and broadsword were the "evolutions" of the Medieval swords, who had fell into disuse due to the discovery and widespread use of firearms. The two-handed sword was used in heavy combat by fearsome warriors. Various designs were in use; from the specialized bearing swords (never intended for combat), to the small Swiss/German swords with the parrying hooks, and this one, which is in essence a very large war sword. This weapon is wonderfully balanced due to the blade shape, but it's a purely slashing weapon; there's no point in thrusting with such a heavy sword. This type of sword, even though it was not as large as the specialized two-handers of various mercenary groups, proved ideal not only for duels but also for defending castle walls

and narrow spaces. The name of the sword comes from the Battle of Raven, which even though was settled by cannons, also saw some pretty bloody hand-to-hand combat on the walls. *Note: Despite the weapon's size, it is rather light; you may wish to ignore the +1 accuracy penalty for quite strong (12+ STR) characters.*

Overall Length: 146,5 cm. Blade Length: 112,5 cm. Blade Width: 6 cm

Sticklestad Viking Sword



A handsome Viking sword, this one was named after the battle of Sticklestad, the last battle of St. Olaf. This was warfare of the old school, with nothing but two armies meeting sword-to-sword. A brutal, bloody fight, where the mighty Olaf fell. He was later canonized by the Catholics as St. Olaf, due to his fame for his exploits. This beautifully made sword (the right specimen) is a replica of a true weapon which saw quite some action in that battle. It is light, well-balanced, and capable of both cutting and thrusting; indeed, a worthy weapon.

Overall Length: 92,5 cm. Blade Length: 77,5 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm

Sword on the Great Seal of Robert the Bruce



Robert the Bruce appears to be one of the most "romantic" figures of history, famed for perseverance, courage and determination, only matched by his fighting skills. He was striving for the Crown of Scotland, even though he was betrayed, deserted, beset by enemies on all sides. Finally, he managed a glorious victory, which happened to be one of the worst defeats suffered by an English army, at Bannockburn, which won him the crown and a place in legend as one of Scotland's greatest kings and heroes. This particular sword design is taken from the Great Seal of Robert the Bruce, which displays a knight carrying a shield emblazoned with the Rampant Lion of Scotland; in his hand

he holds a sword with a distinctive curved crossguard and a quite effective blade. This particular sword isn't only true to the sword on the seal, but also probably to the sword that the actual Robert the Bruce carried. It's a good weapon, with a blade that has a smooth taper ending in a serviceable point, able to deliver devastating cuts as well as hard thrusts. The crossguard also tapers to a point.

Overall Length: 91,25 cm. Blade Length: 75,6 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Towton Sword



This lightning fast weapon is named after the battle at Towton in 1461, where the yet uncrowned Edward IV, the "white rose" of the War of the Roses, marched a large Yorkist force to attack the Lancastrians (the "red rose"), whose leader was the legitimate king Henry VI. The Yorkist army was led by the Earl of Warwick, Richard Neville, who was named "The King Maker" in English history. Neville attacked the royalists' strong position on a slope at Towton. His luck was incredible; even though his army was fighting uphill, a raging and blinding snow storm at their backs enabled the Yorkist spearmen to reach the Lancastrians unnoticed, whereas the wind was in favor of the Yorkist archers, whose arrows, aided by the wind, outranged the Lancastrian archers. The 20,000 royalists eventually charged down to face their enemies; the bloody hand-to-hand raged on for 6 hours, while thousands died. The sword itself is a superb fighting weapon, with a long, slim blade capable of both cutting and thrusting. On foot, it could be

wielded two handed, dealing shearing slashes and hard thrusts that would decimate the light infantry of the day, and from horseback, its balance and weight allow one-handed blows of considerable power to anyone in reach. *Note: If used two-handed, increase damage and actions by +1. However, due to the fact that the second hand grips half the pommel, an uneven surface, you may ignore the accuracy bonus [GM's discretion].*

Overall Length: 110 cm. Blade Length: 90 cm. Blade Width: 4,5 cm. Blade Material: Well-Tempered High Carbon Steel

Two Handed Great Sword



This design is typical of German and Swiss two-handed swords, with the long hilt and crossguard with side rings, as well as parrying hooks and a sheathed blade, for shortening the reach of the weapon for use in close combat. The weapon seems particularly heavy, and requires a strong wielder to be used effectively. This particular type of sword was in use until Early Renaissance, though with the demise of armor the "version" intended for combat grew smaller. *Note: This sword is rather heavy, so you may choose to worsen accuracy to +2 unless wielded by stronger characters (12+ STR). This sword had a second weight listing, at about 3 kg; if you wish, you may instead use that one and ignore the accuracy penalty for stronger (12+ STR) characters.*

Overall Length: 170 cm. Blade Length: 100 cm. Blade Width: 5,6 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel.

Viking Chieftain Sword



The Vikings were known for being relentless and ferocious warriors in the Dark Ages. Their whole culture and outlook revolved around war and conquest. As a result, their leader (the chieftain), could not be but the best warrior of all. Such a title was honorary, bestowed only to the braver and fiercer of Vikings. Such warriors brandished swords similar to this one in battle... well, almost. Since every sane warrior prefers a well-balanced weapon, this one seems to be lacking in that quality. It's ridiculously heavy for its size, limiting its performance. Not to mention that there is quite some doubt at the claim that their swords were engraved with a V, standing for Viking, since they didn't use the Latin alphabet. Like all Viking swords, the blade has little point despite its slight tapering, and is a slashing weapon. *Note: This sword is ridiculously heavy, you may wish to impose an additional +1 accuracy penalty to characters that aren't extremely strong (13+ STR), or even a +2 for strong ones (11+ STR).*

Overall Length: 90 cm. Blade Length: 75 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm.

Viking Sword - Double Edge



Viking warriors were known in the Dark Ages as ruthless invaders and fierce warriors, carving their fame with blood. This particular sword is the type they would have favored; long, double edged, and heavy. Unfortunately it is so heavy that its speed is limited. Surprisingly, even though this sword is, according to its name, a Viking sword, the guard and 5-lobe pommel are embellished with a Celtic knot. Conclusions are up to you. This particular weapon, as all Viking swords, has no taper, a barely serviceable point, and it was used almost exclusively for slashing.

Overall Length: 92 cm. Blade Length: 75,6 cm. Blade Width: 4,1 cm.

War Sword of Albrecht II



Even though Albrecht II was emperor of the Holy Roman Empire for a very short time, he did get to possess a fine sword, the replica of which is presented here. This is a superb example of a war sword, able to be used one- or two-handed. The well tempered high carbon steel blade has a flattened oval cross-guard and a fuller running one third of its length; both it and the pommel are etched, the latter of which has the Royal Eagle on one face and the Rampant Lion on the other.

Note: If used two-handed, increase damage and actions by +1.

Overall Length: 111,8 cm. Blade Length: 89,3 cm. Blade Width: 5,9 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Warbrand from the Maciejowski Bible

A major artifact from the 1250s is the Maciejowski Bible, a book with paintings and drawings from Parisian artists depicting a stunning variety of arms, armor and clothing in use during the 13th century. The Italian text is presumed to have been added half a century later. Some weapons from the Maciejowski Bible represent a surprising evolution of the sword, such as the Medieval Chopper (presented later) and this particular weapon, which came with no original name so it was named Warbrand. "Brand" is an old word for sword [hence the verb brandish]. This particular weapon is part-

polearm, part-sword, with a sleek, light, single edged blade intended for chopping while having enough of a point to stab with. It can be used with two hands both on foot and on horseback, but it is light enough to be swung with one.

Note: If used two-handed, increase damage and actions by +1. Alternatively, due to the sword's shape, you may use Oriental Weapons/Daikatana instead of European War Swords/Hand & a Half Sword.

Overall Length: 120 cm. Blade Length: 85 cm. Blade Width: 4,3 cm.



Medium Blades

15th Century Italian Short Sword



Despite the name, the size of this weapon actually is the size of a combat or arming sword, since it is also both a stabbing and a slashing weapon. It is light and fast, able to deliver a cut or a thrust with equal ease. It was commonly found in the hands of men-at-arms, pikemen, archers, and other light infantry troops, who resorted to it when their main weapon was disabled. In the confines of a mass melee, its compact size enabled it to be quick and handy. Unfortunately, the relatively short blade of the weapon is at a disadvantage against larger swords in duels, even though it is capable of parrying other swords without difficulty.

Overall Length: 75 cm. Blade Length: 60 cm. Blade width: 6 cm. Blade Thickness: 0,5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Falcatta



During Roman times, one of the most feared races of warriors was the Celt-Iberians. The reason of the Roman fear was the Iberian weapons: the Falcatta, one of the most devastating swords ever made. It is considered to be of Greek, or, possibly, Etruscan origin, (though the armies of Alexander the Great were known to carry it) however it has spread in Southern Russia as well as Spain. In the hands of the Spanish it became most feared by the Romans, as a blow from its inward curving blade could split both split and helmet. The blade is made from high carbon steel, whereas the handle is solid brass.

This sword is a pure chopping weapon, which can deal tremendous cutting blows; even though it has an acceptable stabbing point, it was rarely if ever used in combat, overshadowed by its cutting power.

Overall Length: 62,5 cm. Blade Length: 50 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Celtic Combat Sword



This blade, while not a replica of a true Celtic sword, certainly meets their criteria. Even though the sword has a strong, deadly point, it is mainly a cutting weapon, despite its slightly shorter-than-most blade. It is mostly meant for decoration, however, it can be wielded in combat since it is made of high carbon spring steel.

Nevertheless, it is a work of art, with a solid brass guard and pommel, both in the shape of crescents, and a grip made of dark ebony wood and separated by round brass spacers.

Overall Length: 60 cm. Blade Length: 47,5 cm. Blade Width: 3 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Spring Steel

French Badelaire



Even though armor grew stronger, the already popular falchion maintained its popularity. Much loved by foot soldiers, it could also be used for secondary purposes: clearing brush, chopping down small trees, and other chores that require a sweet spot closer to the tip blade [Unfortunately, straight swords are not nearly as good in such type of work due to their shape]. The Badelaire is of French design, a falchion with a slightly longer and curved blade. The Badelaire also has a deadly stabbing point and can be used for thrusts, but its main function is cutting (or, more accurately, chopping). The guard is in the, very popular at later ages, S style [but it is not similar to the Irish versions of such a guard].

Overall Length: 85 cm. Blade Length: 70 cm. Blade Width: 5,6 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

German Falchion



Even though Medieval Art often depicts the falchion, very few original swords of this type are still in existence. Such a rarity of the falchion however may be proof of its true popularity; most falchions were used up in battle! Or, on the other hand, falchions were more associated with commoners, so fewer were passed down by noblemen as antiques these days. Even though double-edged swords are more commonly known in this era as the prevalent weapons, in truth the single edged falchion was favored by a large amount of knights and men-at-arms. Its wide cutting blade is extremely effective against mail [during that era, plate armors, though existent, were very expensive and affordable only by the affluent]. Despite the fact that the falchion was developed as a cutting weapon, the

stabbing point was not ignored; most falchions could be used for powerful thrusts. This particular example of a falchion has a very strong point, able of penetrating mail with a hard thrust or stab.

Overall Length: 85 cm. Blade Length: 70 cm. Blade Width: 4,3 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Greek Hoplite Sword



This sword is similar to the designs of Ancient Greek swords, this particular version of the leaf shaped blade is more reminiscent of Celtic rather than Greek swords. Nevertheless, a leaf-shaped blade was common in the Ancient Greek armies of the 5th century [earlier swords were smaller and designed for stabbing rather than slashing, in the confines of hand-to-hand combat with hoplites]. This kind of sword was used even in the era of Alexander, though pure slashing weapons such as early falchions or machetes were more common. This particular weapon is dual-purpose: it has a wide blade for slashing, but it also has a fine stabbing point. Like the original Greek swords, the grip is made of wood.

Overall Length: 72,5 cm. Blade Length: 59 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Grosse Messer

In use from the early 15th century to the late 16th, the *grosse messer* ("big knife" in German) was a common armament in Central and Northern Europe, especially as civilian wear for protection against bandits and robbers. Even though often overlooked by scholars and enthusiasts, it appears in a great many of woodcuts of the period, particularly Durer's. It is said that it is shaped somewhat like a katana, and in truth it was often used in the same way;



sweeping slashes with a one- or two-handed grip, and a functional point which saw little if any use in combat. The exact origins of the weapon are unknown, but a popular theory suggests it was the combination of the infantry falchion with the two-handed weapons favored by the Swiss and Germans. *Note: If used two-handed, increase damage and actions by +1. Since this is larger than a falchion and able to be used two handed, and as mentioned in the description it was used like a katana, the GM may rule that it can be used with either Chopping & Slashing Swords/Falchion and/or Curved Swords/Katana.*

Overall Length: 100 cm. Blade Length: 75 cm. Blade Material: Tempered High Carbon Steel

Knights of the Round Table Sword



This nice-looking sword, even though it was termed as functional, is in truth of little use. This short sword was made with Arthurian knightly weapons in mind, even though it falls a bit short in length and efficiency. The blade is tapered and capable of either slashing or stabbing, though the weapon's ridiculous weight makes both rather hard. The non-blade portion of the sword is nearly one third of its whole part, making for a nice grip on the sword, even though the decorated [with a sword centered on it] guard and pommel are half that. It would make for a nice short sword, if it weren't for its ridiculous weight and balance. *Note: You may wish to give an additional +1 penalty if the character isn't strong enough (11+ or 12+ STR)*

Overall Length: 93,75 cm. Blade Length: 66,25 cm. Blade Width: 5,3 cm. Blade Material: High Carbon Steel

Landsknecht Katzbalger



The German *landsknecht* was a mercenary, usually a pikeman, selling his skill throughout Europe. A classical armament of such a hired warrior was this weapon, which in German means "Cat Gutter". A short sword, this weapon was rather effective in the bloody hand-to-hand combat that followed after the initial push, its confines rendering longer weapons useless. The sword's blade has the appropriate width and weight to slash, but its longer blade than the average short sword makes it a good thrusting weapon as well. This particular design of the weapon dates back to the 1500s. *Overall Length: 82,5 cm. Blade Length: 70 cm. Blade width: 5,5 cm. Blade Thickness: 0,2 cm.*

Long Hunter Stag Woodsman's Sword



This type of sword was commonly encountered in the hands of woodsmen and hunters. The size of a short sword, it was single-edged, designed for cutting rather than thrusting even though it had a serviceable point. Undoubtedly it could be used as a skinning tool as well, even though its large size made it less than ideal for this purpose. It was made with both defense and hunting in mind, and works equally efficient in either task. Most such swords were made with a simple decoration to identify them as such: their hilt was in truth an antler or horn, as seen in this one.

Overall Length: 83 cm. Blade Length: 63,75 cm. Blade Material: 420 satin finish stain resistant steel. Sheath: Handmade thick cow hide.

Medieval Chopper from the Maciejowski Bible



Even though this may look like a fantasy weapon, it did exist (even though it was not often encountered in either literature or art), and evidence supporting its existence exist not only in the Maciejowski Bible but also several other manuscripts of that particular period. Even though the name "Medieval Chopper" might not inspire a writer or poet to create works of art, it certainly is appropriate, for this weapon is designed to split helmets and crack armor. In truth, it is a large, two-handed cleaver, with little thrusting point. Even though the weapon isn't that heavy, it requires two hands to be used properly.

Overall Length: 80 cm. Blade Length: 47,5 cm. Handle Length: 32,5 cm. Blade Width: 5 cm

Mountain Trapper Stag Hunting Sword



Similar to the previous hunting sword, this one is smaller and was probably used by mountain trappers. Also, like the previous sword, this one's hilt is also made from antler horn. Its blade is single edged and slightly curved near the tip. This weapon can be used either for cutting or slashing, and was often used to kill small game (skinning it required a shorter blade).

Overall Length: 77,7 cm. Blade Length: 53,75 cm. Blade Material: 420 satin finish stain resistant steel. Sheath: Handmade thick cow hide.

Roman Gladius Sword



A distinctive weapon, the Roman short sword accompanied the Legionnaire along with the pilum. The gladius is, despite its size, a slashing weapon with little taper, but it does have a thrusting point; perfect for the confines of close combat between armies. This particular sword pictured, unfortunately, isn't exactly meant for combat; the sword isn't very well balanced and is rather heavy. It is ornamented however, and it would make a great showpiece. *Note: This sword is ridiculously heavy for a short sword. You may even wish to incur an additional +1 penalty in case the character isn't strong enough [11+ STR].*

Overall Length: 55 cm. Blade Length: 75 cm. Blade width: 5,5 cm. Blade Thickness: 0,2 cm.

Small Blades

Coustille Sword

Blurring the line between short sword and combat sword, the Coustille sword was developed when the need for a weapon larger than a dagger, yet more compact than a short sword, arose. The Coustille sword was rather popular. It was short enough to pass as a dagger inside a walled town or city, where only nobles were allowed to carry swords openly, and yet long and broad enough to parry attacks from a sword. It could be thrust under the belt in varying positions, and it was easy to ride with. Supposedly, the Coustille was favored by the typical man-at-arms, if only for cutting the throats of prisoners who could not be ransomed.

Overall Length: 57,5 cm. Blade Length: 42,5 cm. Blade width: 2,8 cm.



Yamato Kimazaki by Ryan Kershner

Species: Human **Gender:** Male

Profession: Free Agent **Career:** Assassin

Attributes: Can't Get Enough, Apathetic, Honest, Independent

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res Mod
Strength	11	5	+1
Dexterity	14	7	+2[+3]
Constitution	8	4	
Intelligence	12	6	+1
Will	10	5	+0
Personality	6	3	

ACTION CHECK (die d0) Actions Per Round 3
 Mar 17+ Ord 16 Good 8 Amaz 4 Last Resorts/Cost 1/0

COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES

Sprint: 24 Run: 16 Walk: 6 Swim: 6 Easy Swim: 3

DURABILITY

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	8	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	4	□□□□
Fatigue	4	□□□□

ATTACK	Score	Base Type	Range	Damage
Unarmed	15/7/3	d0 L/O	Personal	d6+1s/d6+3s/d4+1w
Katana	17/8/4	-d4 L/O	Personal	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4+2m
Knife,thrown	15/7/3	d0 L/O	11/22/44	d4w+1/d4+2w/d4+3w
Knife,hand	17/8/4	d0 L/O	Personal	d4w+1/d4+2w/d4+3w

DEFENSE

- +3 resistance modifier vs. melee
- +3 resistance modifier vs. ranged
- +1 INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills

PERKS: Concentration, Observant, Psionic Awareness

FLAWS: Code Of Honor, Old Injury 4, Infamy 4

SKILLS

STR

Athletics 11/5/2 *-climb* 15/7/3, *jump* 15/7/3, *throw* 15/7/3
 Melee Weapons 11/5/2 *-blade* 17/8/4
 Unarmed Attack 11/5/2 *-power martial arts* 15/7/3

DEX

Acrobatics 14/7/3 *-daredevil*, 18/9/4, *dodge* 17/9/4,
fall 18/9/4
 Modern Ranged 14/7/3 *-pistol* 15/7/3
 Stealth 14/7/3 *-hide* 18/9/4, *shadow* 18/9/4,
sneak 18/9/4
 Vehicle Operation 14/7/3 *-land* 16/8/4

CON

Stamina 8/4/2 *-endurance* 12/6/3, *resist pain* 14/7/3

INT

Knowledge 12/6/3 *-language [Chinese]* 15/7/3,
-language [English] 13/6/3, *language [Japanese]* 16/8/4
 Security 12/6/3 *-security devices* 17/8/4

WIL

Awareness 10/5/2 *-intuition* 11/5/2, *perception* 11/5/2
 Investigate 10/5/2 *-search* 15/7/3, *track* 15/7/3
 Resolve 10/5/2 *-mental* 13/6/3, *physical* 14/5/2
 Street Smart 10/5/2 *-criminal elements* 12/6/3,
-street knowledge 12/6/3

PER

Interaction 6/3/1 *-intimidate* 11/5/2

NOTES

Free Agent Resistance Modifier Bonus (STR), DEX Increase Achievement Bonus, Extra Action Achievement Bonus, Action Check Increase Achievement Bonus,

Reflexes DEX Resistance Modifier Bonus, Danger Sense Perk: -2 step bonus to Awareness-Intuition checks, Power Martial Arts Rank Melee Resist. Bonus +1

Background

Yamato Kimazaki was born in Japan, and at a young age lost his family in a drive by shooting committed by assassins of the Chinese mafia. The faces of his parents killers were burned into Yamato's memory, haunting his dreams and fueling his desire for revenge. Lying in a hospital bed, he swore retribution and committed himself to the task of hunting down the killers. After a few years at the age of ten he made a clumsy but determined attempt on one of the killers, who easily thwarted the attack. Instead of killing Yamato the assassin abducted the boy and presented him to his boss for judgement. The mafia leader saw the coldness in Yamato's heart and sent him to be brain washed and trained as an assassin.

The Chinese mafia taught him how to kill without remorse. His training was arduous, and he was often tortured to punish him for his earlier attack on their own, as well as condition him against pain. On one such event, they took a screwdriver and jammed it in his wrist between the two bones. The damage was so great that it caused irreparable damage to the nerves, so on occasion he loses his ability to use his left hand. This happens more often when his left arm gets hit in some way.

Yamato spent years training for the Chinese mafia before he was trusted to make his first hit. After the kill, he realized he loved dealing death and did so with enthusiasm. He soon lost count of the many lives he took without a glimmer of guilt. After proving himself, the mafia sent Yamato on more important and dangerous hits. He learned how to stalk his prey, how to set up traps, and how to execute without a trace left behind.

However, his vow for revenge was always in the back of his mind. The brain-washing couldn't erase the memory of his parents' murder. Finally after years of working for the mafia gang, he became their top assassin. On that day, he began to systematically hunt down each member of the gang, and fulfilled his vow. While standing over the body of the last one, he decided that his training would not be wasted.

Yamato began working for the enemies of the Chinese mafia, and performed more hits against them until it was no longer safe for him to operate in Asia. He moved to the United States and hired himself out to various criminal organizations across the country, performing hits for both sides. His style soon became known to both sides who put hits out on him for working it both ways.

After spending a few months laying low, Yamato began working again, this time for large companies who wanted certain people to be eliminated. He caught the attention of federal agents, who began hunting him. However, he was a shadow, a ghost that no one could even get close to.

Yamato hides once more, but one day will come out of his exile and kill again. It burns inside his soul, he aches for it, he uses it to forget his loss. He needs it.

Incorporating Yamato Into Your Game:

Yamato Kimazaki is a hired assassin, working for whoever pays him enough. A friend of the players has rooted around in the wrong place and become a problem for some unscrupulous individual or organization. The friend sends the players incriminating evidence before being killed by Yamato, who was also hired to retrieve the evidence. To fulfill his mission he must hunt down the players. He loves a good game of cat and mouse, and may actually meet the players under friendly conditions to enhance the thrill, attacking stealthily at a later time.

Physical Description

Yamato is lanky and graceful Japanese man. Always ready for action, Yamato wears black suits tailored for easy movement. He also wears dark sunglasses, day or night. Inside his car he stores his katana and custom made throwing knives, which are carried on his person when working.

Personality

Ruthless and cold hearted, Yamato is now driven by his love for the hunt, the kill, and the money. He is, however, very uncomfortable around people, as he has only been trained to seek out and exploit their weaknesses.

Beneath the cold exterior is a tortured soul. He looks for anything to relieve his pain for the loss for his family. In his twisted mind he kills for them, but with each kill, he feels a little farther away from his family.

Mike Meechan aka Mig Nova

Digital Artist

When did you start playing RPG's (not necessarily Althernity)?

In about 1986. We started out playing *The Marvel Superheroes RPG*. We were all into comic books in those days.

When did you start playing Althernity?

When the game first hit the stores, 1998.

What are your past contributions to the Althernity community?

My main contributions are in digital artwork for Althernity, mostly Stardrive. I have contributed several renders for the upcoming Stellar Ring Netbook. I've actually lost count how many. Plus, I do lots of renders for my own Stardrive campaign. They are all posted on my yahoo group "EscapeVelocity2503". Many of them are also posted on *Tequilastarrise.net* and *Althernity.net*. In addition I've written up several unique pieces of technology, facilities, and starships as .pdf's or .doc files. Those are available as downloads here and there on the aforementioned sites. I keep busy.

What Althernity projects are you currently working on?

All of the above, but my latest project is a drawing of our starship, *The Liquid Sky*, in a dogfight with several External cruisers. Lots of explosions and twisted metal flying.

What project would you most like to see accomplished for Althernity?

I'd like to see that Stellar Ring netbook. I think we're all eager to see that long-awaited opus.

If there was a campaign that you'd like to run or simply play describe it to us (and indicate which of running/ playing).

I'd like to run a campaign entirely within the GRID. Where the heroes don't even know what each other really look like. -All action/interaction in the virtual worlds. I think that has the potential to be mind bending.

What is the most recent RPG-related book/item that you have acquired?

The system Guide to Aegis. But that was years ago. I don't really buy much of anything anymore. I've got practically all the books, in one format or another.

Any good (Althernity or other) websites to recommend ?

<http://www.tequilastarrise.net/index.php>

<http://www.althernity.net/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/escapevelocity2503/>



Favorite sci-fi/fantasy artist(s) and why?

I like Giger most of all. The way he combines organic and mechanical is incredible. Brom is great too. Especially his portraits. He did the cover of the first *Alien Compendium*, actually.

Favorite sci-fi/fantasy book(s) and why?

My favorite sci-fi book would have to be *Neuromancer* by William Gibson. H.P. Lovecraft did a ton of great sci-fi and dimensional short stories, too. I can't get enough of that guy's writings.

Favorite sci-fi/fantasy movie(s) and why?

The Matrix.-nuff said.

What sci fi/fantasy character in a book, television show, video game, or movie would you most like to be and why?

Neo. He's easy to identify with. He starts the trilogy as this kind of nerdy, computer obsessed dude who wonders why he doesn't fit in. Then he becomes nigh all-powerful, ends up scoring with a fine lady in latex, and saves the world. Who wouldn't love that life?

What profession/career and level are you in Real Life and what is your highest skill rank?

Tech Op, Scientist. I'd probably have pretty equal ranks in physics, chemistry, and biology- a jack of all trades and a master of none,lol. I've been technically supporting laboratory instrumentation for going on 4 years. I don't know what rank that would make me.