



Scribe
of
Orcus



The *Scribe of Orcus* is a periodical produced by **Goblinoid Games** to support "retro-clone" game systems, and to provide "compatible" material for various old-school RPGs. These systems include (but are not limited to) OSRIC, Labyrinth Lord, Mutant Future, and GORE. Most issues of the *Scribe of Orcus* will vary from 5 to 10 pages, and will focus on solid gaming text.

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MUTANT FUTURE

Factions I: Bringers of the Light

By Ryan Denison

Introduction

Mutant Future Factions is a series of group factions for the Mutant future RPG. Factions are groups of humans, mutants, or "others" who are united for a cause or belief. They may be inserted into any Mutant Future campaign to be used as antagonists.

Group History

Markar Bolt left his tribe at the age of 15 to engage in a rite of passage requiring him to travel to a distant set of ruins, bringing back an artifact to prove his readiness for becoming a shaman. Many had tried, and many had failed. Markar set out with nothing but a hunting knife, a small leather pouch full of healing herbs, and the shaman's light maker. He arrived at the ruins some 3 moons later, and entered after performing a protection ritual. He fought a plethora of strange creatures living in the ruins, for even the smallest of them was highly aggressive.

Markar saw the signs of his people written on the walls, showing where each successive shaman initiate had traveled slightly further than the last in an effort to obtain an artifact. The competitive spirit of the tribe carried on, even in the face of death. He saw the bodies picked clean by the vicious inhabitants of the ruins. Markar made the decision to travel deeper than any person before him, and to find an artifact that would benefit the tribe more than any other.

After fighting his way deep into the ruins, he forced his way into a large room full of the speaking machines of the ancients. Their glowing nodules blinked red, and a number of large, thick branches ran from them to a box in the center of the room. Markar used a chair leg to pry open the box and a brilliantly glowing orange light spilled forth. He stared at the swirling lights until he became dizzy and fainted. While unconscious, he dreamt of the gods, and he saw similar lights in their eyes. When Markar awoke, he looked into the box again, and saw that the light emanated from a sphere inside the box. He had found an eye of the gods! He scooped the eye into a pack found nearby and began to make his way out of the ruins.

As he navigated his exit, no creature disturbed him. In fact, they all fled the cleansing light of the eye. The gods were

protecting him. After making his way outside, Markar camped for the night. In the morning, he discovered that the gods had left for him a number of small creatures to make his morning feast. The creatures lay near, immobilized. Each night it was the same. The eye of the gods protected him from large creatures and provided him a meal each morning. His travel to the village was made much easier, and Markar made sure to thank them profusely at dusk and at dawn, as was the custom of his people.

Markar's return to the village was celebrated, and he immediately joined the shamans of the tribe. The artifact kept working even though his travels had ended. Each morning, small creatures could be found around the village, alive but immobilized, simply waiting to be scooped up. There were no more attacks by the strange wasteland creatures while the eye was in the village. When the next moon came, the light within the eye seemed to take on a new life. The surface of the sphere roiled and swirled, eventually becoming so bright that Markar was forced to leave his dwelling for fear it would blind him. He knew that the gods were peering through the eye to judge the village and its inhabitants, and he shared his thoughts with the other shamans.



Suddenly, after one week of intense activity, the eye inexplicably returned to its normal glowing state. The next morning the village discovered that the gods had blessed them with a number of large and small animals. Markar explained his belief that the gods had judged the village and found it pure. The villagers celebrated with a large feast and reveled in their new found prosperity.

Soon after the feast, however, a terrible sickness came. People in the village began to take ill with a wasting disease. None of the usual remedies could help in any way; the shamans could do nothing but watch as villagers died. Soon only the shamans and their children, who seemed to be immune to the disease, were all that remained of the village. Even the spouses of the shamans were not immune. After a period of mourning it came to be understood that the strongest and most righteous had been chosen to bring the light of the gods to the world, and to separate the worthy from the unworthy.

Because Markar had brought the power of the gods among them, he was made leader of the Bringers of the Light. In the mind of Markar, the shamans' duty to the gods was clear. They must bring the cleansing light to others. They would travel from settlement to settlement, bringing with them the god's eye. They would await the great judgment of the god's eye, bear witness to the sickness, and take those who survived as followers.

Game Information

The orb that the Bringers of the Light call the eye of the gods is actually the core of a highly radioactive weapon. The compressed sphere is highly unstable, and the light that constantly circulates around it is a warning system that would only make sense to the ancients. During periods of heightened activity, the warning system becomes almost unbearably bright as the system tries to warn the handlers that the potent radiation is escaping the core.

To decide what level of radiation the sphere is currently giving off, roll 1d6-1 to find the level, and 1d4 to find out how many weeks the sphere will be active at that level. A result of 0 is valid. After the first period of radioactivity, roll 1d6, and after the second period roll 1d6+1. Continue this progression until the orb reaches a class 7 radiation output, after which you will begin again by rolling 1d6-1.

Example: The Bringers are hiding in a market hub, waiting for their god to cleanse the population. The ML rolls 1d6-1 to determine the radiation class. He rolls a 2, so the radiation is class 1. He then rolls 1d4 to see how many weeks it stays at this level. He rolls a 1, so the radiation level will be class 1 for one week before he has to roll again to see if the level changes. After that week is over, the ML will roll 1d6 to find the level of radiation.

During the periods of lowest activity, the sphere is generating a very small amount of radiation in irregular

bursts. These bursts of radiation can kill small creatures such as mice or other small rodents within a 50' radius, as their small bodies can quickly overwhelmed by the radiation bursts. Roll 1d4 to find out how many small creatures have perished due to exposure.

Larger creatures are only lightly affected at this low level of activity. Assume that they are either negligibly affected or assign 1d4 hp damage per week of exposure to each creature within the radius if they fail a saving throw. It is simplest to make one saving throw roll for the radiation, and have all NPCs use that roll for the purpose of the save. The effect of this level of radiation takes the form of tiredness, aching joints, and other symptoms that could go unnoticed by people used to hard living.

During periods of high activity, the range of effect increases so that a class 5 radiation will have an effective radius of 1/2 mile. This should be handled as one saving throw roll as well.

A number of occurrences will foreshadow what is to come during the highest output of radiation. First, the light emanating from the sphere will become blindingly bright. Second, small creatures will be found dead all around the affected area at a rate of 1d20+10 per day. Finally, the survival instinct will cause animals or other creatures who survive the first wave of damage to flee the area in droves.

So far, the Bringers have only attempted to cleanse one settlement, a small mining camp whose workers belonged to a settlement some miles distant. The entire settlement was wiped out, except for one man who fled in the night when everyone began to take ill. Markar sent Paakis Turk after the escapee, but Turk could not bring himself to force the man to return, and instead let him go.

Non-player Characters

Gear

All members of the Bringers of the Light are assumed to be wearing woven cloth tunics and carrying simple weapons such as spears and small knives unless otherwise noted. Each member will also carry a small bag of provisions, including dried fruits, cured meats, and various herbs. It is quite possible that the Bringers have acquired other weapons or artifacts in their travels, but this is left to the discretion of the Mutant Lord.

Each shaman or priestess carries an artifact taken from the ruins during their test to become a tribal leader. These objects are viewed as sacred, even if their original use is unknown. It is upon these items that they will swear oaths or ask for assistance from the gods.

Mutations

All members of the Bringers of the Light share a common mutation; Reflective Epidermis (Radiation). They are

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completely immune to the effects of radiation, even that which does not come from the sphere. They may have other mutations as well if the Mutant Lord wishes, but by default have no other mutations.

Markar Bolt – Leader

STR	9	INT	11
DEX	11	WIS	12
CON	15	CHA	14
hp	82	AC	8

Markar Bolt is tall and thin, with wild black hair and pale blue eyes. He dresses in a long tunic decorated with an assortment of bones and trinkets found during the group's wasteland travels. He is silver tongued, often telling stories of the group's travels (conveniently leaving out the part where people sicken and die) and can make even the most hardened wasteland inhabitant feel at ease. It is often he who convinces people they meet in the wasteland to join up with the group, and he who convinces them to stay even if they start suffering from the effects of the orb.

Markar carries the orb with him at all times in a large padded pack. At night, he often removes it and stares into the swirling lights until the gods send him a vision telling him which way the group should travel. He makes cryptic statements about these visions, and has taken to expressing his own wishes as those of the gods.

Totem: The orb.

Escrue Tun – Priestess

STR	10	INT	13
DEX	9	WIS	10
CON	7	CHA	8
hp	28	AC	8

Escrue Tun is second in command of the Bringers. She is considered the most beautiful member of the tribe, and also the most self interested. She secretly wishes to be the leader of the group, and believes that Markar is taking a great chance moving the orb around so much. She is very covetous of the orb and tries to get near it whenever possible. This has led her to begin a relationship with Markar, something that is generally frowned upon by the rest of the group. She uses her position as a wedge between Markar and the other members, especially Root, who she knows disapproves of her relationship with their leader.

Totem: A metal tube with a button in the end. Pressing the button does nothing but make the button light up (it was the trigger for an ancient explosive pack, now long gone.)

Kolt – Shaman/Historian

STR	11	INT	9
DEX	9	WIS	15
CON	5	CHA	4
hp	22	AC	8

Kolt is most interested in the history of the world, and is an eager searcher for artifacts or remains of past civilizations. He has an uncanny knack for finding his way through even the most dangerous areas of the wasteland. His extensive exploration of the areas surrounding the original location of the tribe have made him the Bringer's expedition leader. All of the members trust him completely, for he has never failed to lead them safely through the wasteland. If he becomes aware of ruins nearby, he will always make sure that the group stalls near them, allowing him a chance to explore. Often Paakis Turk will accompany him in exploring such ruins.

Kolt carries a pack of exploring gear with him at all times. This pack consists of the following: 20' of woven rope, a solar battery flashlight, a number of magnetic door cards, and a handful of loose keys. The ML is encouraged to give him some other strange or useful artifacts that seem interesting.

Kolt's low Charisma score stems from the wounds he has suffered while exploring. His flesh is riddled with scars of various sizes and severity, and can be immediately off-putting to most folks who do not know him.

Totem: A large box with an inset screen that is capable of displaying schematics and plans, none of which are understood by the shamans.

Paakis Turk – Warrior/Shaman

STR	17	INT	11
DEX	18	WIS	4
CON	13	CHA	7
hp	64	AC	8

Paakis Turk lost his wife and children in the initial purge caused by the sphere. He is haunted and grief stricken, and sometimes questions the wisdom of a god who would let such a thing happen. His connections to the tribe and his responsibilities as a shaman weigh heavily on him, especially when the group reaches a settlement and the purging begins. He often takes to drinking liquor, which sometimes makes him gregarious, and other times makes him combative and paranoid.

Turk is a large bearded man whose body is rippling with muscle. He knows much about poisons and combat, and takes it upon himself to train any new members how to fight with weapons or their bare hands.

Totem: The faceplate of an exterminator bot. Paakis wears this around his neck on a length of rope, and talks to it sometimes when he is inebriated.

Root – Priestess/Medicine woman

STR	11	INT	17
DEX	10	WIS	13
CON	4	CHA	13
hp	20	AC	8

Root is a small old woman with deep set green eyes and wrinkled, leathery skin. She is completely bald, and wears a small cap made of dried and woven grasses. She carries a number of herbs used for healing rituals, energy giving roots for long travels, and a medley of other helpful concoctions. These herbs offer 1d4 hp recovery 30 minutes after taking them, and the roots offer +1 to CON for a 6 hour duration. Each of these remedies may be used once per day.

Totem: A robotic articulated hand with surgical tools at the end of the "fingers."

Other Group Members

The composition of the group changes as members leave to scout out new settlements and never return, or sicken and die from exposure to the orb. At any given time, the group is composed of 1d6+5 individuals and the founders.

The Bringers will take anyone as a follower, but those who are not immune to radiation or are unable to overcome its affects in some other way (an advanced healing factor, perhaps) do not stay around for very long. Followers may be mutants of any kind. As of late, Markar Bolt has become less accepting of people wishing to leave the group, and often asks Paakis to help them decide to stay.



Breaking Up Can be So Hard

By Daniel Proctor

Introduction

Maybe the most notable difference between *Labyrinth Lord* (or Basic Edition) and other similar fantasy RPGs is that demi-human races are also classes. This feature is appreciated by many players, but also loathed by many who feel that it reduces character options.

This article presents one method of "breaking up" the demi-humans from classes so that they have more options available to them. However, many other possibilities exist, and this method should not be viewed as canon. In addition, I present two new optional races to *Labyrinth Lord*, the half-elf and the half-orc.

Dividing the Belongings

So your elf is sick and tired of only fighting and casting spells? She wants more out of life? Maybe a career of thievery? Well, alright then. Like they say, if you truly love them, let them go, and if they come back...well, you get the idea.

The challenge in dividing races and classes lies in the fact that demi-human classes were never originally designed in a coherent system of balance. For example, by Advanced First Edition standards, elves get a heck of an experience break for being what amounts to multi-classed. Similarly, dwarves kind of get the short end of the deal since they require more experience points to be basically just fighters with a limited level advancement (although it is greater than in Advanced First Edition). So the problem arises, how do we separate race and class but at the same time allow the existing race-classes to remain as balanced class options? We will have to make some compromises, and we will have to take some things in new directions. The following sections discuss the different demi-humans.

General Rules

When a class is selected for a demi-human, the ability requirements must be met for both the class that is ordinarily only available to humans, in addition to any requirements for the demi-human class. For example, even a dwarf thief will have a requirement of CON 9. To some extent this is a moot point since none of the core human classes have ability requirements. However, this issue is important when dealing with optional classes that may appear in other published sources.

When selecting a new class, use the prime requisite and hit dice from the new class, not the demi-human class.

When a demi-human plays a human class, these characters use the human class saving throws and attack matrix, sometimes with adjustments as indicated below. They also must follow any class restrictions.

Keeping Race-Classes in the Game

Using these rules, the existing standard race classes may be retained and played as written. There will be advantages and disadvantages to doing this, as we shall see later.

Dwarves

All dwarf characters retain the racial abilities and languages indicated in *Labyrinth Lord*. When selecting a class other than "dwarf," they receive the following bonuses:

- +2 save versus breath attacks
- +4 save versus poison
- +4 save versus petrify or paralyze

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- +3 save versus wands
- +4 save versus spells or spell-like devices

Dwarves are hardy beings, resistant to magic and poison, and as such they receive bonuses to defend against these effects. In addition, their small size grants them a bonus to finding cover and avoiding breath attacks.

Dwarves may select from the following classes, with the indicated level limits.

Dwarf Classes Available	
Class	Level Limit
Cleric	8
Fighter*	9
Thief	12

*Note that dwarf fighters receive the benefit of faster fighter level progression when compared to dwarf progression, but they can only achieve level 9.

Dwarven thieves receive the following bonuses and penalties to thief abilities:

Dwarf Thief Skill Adjustments	
Skill	Adjustment
Pick Locks	+7%
Find and Remove Traps	+10%
Climb Walls	-10%

Elves

Elf characters receive all racial abilities and languages as discussed in *Labyrinth Lord*. Elves may select from the following classes, with the indicated level limits.

Elf Classes Available	
Class	Level Limit
Cleric	7
Fighter	10
Magic-User	11
Thief	12

There are advantages and disadvantages to an elf fighter or magic-user. Elf fighters progress in levels much faster than when using the elf class. This same advantage exists for elf magic-users, who may also achieve a higher level due to focusing their efforts on one discipline.

Elven thieves receive the following bonuses and penalties to thief abilities:

Elf Thief Skill Adjustments	
Skill	Adjustment
Pick Locks	-5%
Pick Pockets	+5%
Move Silently	+5%
Hide in Shadows	+10%
Hear Noise	+1*

*Elves receive a better dice range for hearing noises. For example, 1st level elven thieves hear noises on a 1-3, and at 9th level it is 1-5. Hear noise may never be better than 1-5.

Halflings

Halfling characters retain the racial abilities and languages indicated in *Labyrinth Lord*. In addition, when selecting a class other than "halfling," they receive the following bonuses:

- +2 save versus breath attacks
- +4 save versus poison
- +4 save versus petrify or paralyze
- +3 save versus wands
- +4 save versus spells or spell-like devices

Like dwarves, halflings are hardy beings, resistant to magic and poison, and as such they receive bonuses to defend against these effects. Their diminutive stature grants them a bonus to finding cover and avoiding breath attacks.

Halflings may select the thief class, with the indicated level limit.

Halfling Classes Available	
Class	Level Limit
Thief	14

Halflings may not select the fighter class simply because there is no benefit in doing so. The existing halfling class is not far removed from the fighter, except that they have lower hit dice than fighters. As an example, in Advanced First Edition rules, halflings may be fighters with a maximum level of 6. If using hit dice from *Labyrinth Lord*, a halfling fighter of 6th level would have an average hp total of 24, the same as a halfling character of 8th level. If the *Labyrinth Lord* wishes, he might allow halfling fighters for a maximum level of 6, using the fighter saving throws and the saving throw adjustments listed above. This would give halfling fighters quicker hp progression, but they would max out at 6th level with a slightly worse attack value.

Halfling thieves receive the following bonuses and penalties to thief abilities:

Halfling Thief Skill Adjustments	
Skill	Adjustment
Pick Locks	+5%
Find and Remove Traps	+5%
Pick Pockets	+5%
Move Silently	+10%
Climb Walls	-15%
Hide in Shadows	+10%

New Races

The following new races are available for campaigns. They are classic races traditionally used in Advanced First Edition games, but are presented here to fit with the sensibilities of *Labyrinth Lord* when playing with separate races and classes.

Half-Elf

Requirements: None

Half-elves are the result of the union of human and elf, and as such they seldom fit into either society. They are slight of build, averaging 150 pounds with an average height of 5 ½ feet. They have pointed ears, and have inherited a love of nature from their elven parent.

Half-elves have 60' infravision. If actively searching, they can detect hidden and secret doors with a roll of 1-2 on 1d6. They have inherited a resistance to the paralyzing effect of ghouls, receiving a +4 to saving throws against this effect. Half-elves may speak their alignment language, common, elvish, gnoll, hobgoblin, and orc.

Half-elves may select from the following classes, with the indicated level limits.

Half-Elf Classes Available	
Class	Level Limit
Cleric	5
Fighter	12
Magic-User	10
Thief	12

Half-elf thieves receive the following bonuses to thief abilities:

Half-Elf Thief Skill Adjustments	
Skill	Adjustment
Pick Pockets	+10%
Hide in Shadows	+5%

Half-Orc

Requirements: CON 9

Half-orcs are the result of the union of human and orc. Orcs will breed with nearly any humanoid, and are fertile beings. The majority of orcish cross-breeds are nearly indistinguishable from orcs in appearance and behavior. Player character half-orcs are assumed to be within the rare 10% of orc hybrids that can pass as ugly humans.

Half-orcs suffer a -2 penalty to CHA. They have 60' infravision, and if actively searching, they can detect hidden and secret doors with a roll of 1-2 on 1d6. Half-orcs may speak their alignment language, common, and orc.

Half-orcs may select from the following classes, with the indicated level limits.

Half-Orc Classes Available	
Class	Level Limit
Cleric	4
Fighter	12
Thief	12

Half-orc thieves receive the following bonuses and penalties to thief abilities:

Half-Orc Thief Skill Adjustments	
Skill	Adjustment
Pick Locks	+5%
Find and Remove Traps	+5%
Pick Pockets	-5%
Climb Walls	+5%

Multiclassing

At the Labyrinth Lord's option, characters may multiclass. Traditionally, humans are not allowed to multiclass, but this is up to the discretion of the Labyrinth Lord. The elf, when used as a race-class, *may not* multiclass. A maximum of three classes may be chosen.

Characters with multiple classes divide all experience points between the classes, and have a separate pool of experience for each class. Experience point bonuses granted due to class prime requisites are granted only to that class's experience pool. Levels are gained as normal, but hit points are halved when a level is gained in a class. For instance, if a multiclassed fighter/thief gains a level as a thief, he rolls 1d4/2. Fractions are recorded, as they may add with fractions from other gains later. If this character receives 1.5 hp, then later gains a fighter level and rolls a 5 on 1d8, he receives 2.5 hp to add to the 1.5, for a total of 4 hp.

All of the character's saving throws and attack values are equal to the best values available for the character's classes and levels. Characters who multiclass sometimes gain class abilities that would otherwise conflict. Notes on specific class combinations follow.

Cleric/Fighter, Cleric/Dwarf, or Cleric/Thief: These characters may use sharp weapons and melee projectiles.

Thief/Cleric, Thief/Fighter, Thief/Dwarf, or Thief/Halfling: Any class combining thieves may use any armor or weapons appropriate for the other class. However, the thief armor restriction still applies so that if a multiclassed thief uses armor heavier than leather or uses a shield, thief skills may not be employed.

Cleric/Magic-User or Fighter/Magic-User: These characters may use sharp objects and any armor.

Notes on the Elf Class and Multiclassing

It's not easy to reconcile the standard elf race-class with multiclassing rules. The elf class does not require as many experience points to advance in level. The only real disadvantage to the elf class compared to a "standard" fighter/magic-user is that the fighter/magic-user will have more hp on average. In addition, a fighter/magic-user will sometimes have better saving throws.



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