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Christmas!

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS



# Signs & Portents

5

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## Editorial



Hi all,

Here we are with our first ever Christmas issue of S&P, and I find myself writing the editorial in October! That tells you a bit about the publishing business. I'm sure sometimes people think that the magazine is produced a few days before its release. If only!

Things are pretty much settling into a nice rhythm in the Signs & Portents department at Mongoose Hall now. By now I guess you are all familiar with the team of writers we have, although I am always keen to see new submissions, so if you have something in mind and would like to share it, why not get in touch. You can find my email address on the Write For The Mongoose page. We like a variety of styles here, as you can probably guess from the approach taken by two of our regular columnists. Shannon Kalvar is continuing with his discussion on Good and Evil in gaming Symposium while Jonny Nexus provides advice on how to rob Santa. It doesn't get much more diverse than that. We've even got a *girl* writing in this issue! Yes, I know, calm down. Lucy Bond is going to address issues pertinent to the ladies amongst us, which will probably be something of an eye opener.

There is plenty going on in the Editorial Department as well. Senior Editor Paul Tucker is lording it over the rest of his team, fleshed out now by new boy Ian Belcher, who has been busy 3.5-ing everything in sight. In fact, there are so many people here now that the weekly gaming group has split into two groups, one playing a Dredd campaign and the other erupting into the Star Wars universe. You'll all be thrilled to know that the next Mongoose Hall serial will focus on our attempts to destabilise the Republic, and will include flying layabout Canaan Banana and his partner Volo Solarin, along with a gang of inept young Jedi including the first Gungan padawan, Tarka Boles. Who can say Dark Side points? Rich Neale is penning this one, so I'd better get ready for some of my own medicine...

Continuing with our theme of servicemen using Mongoose games, we have a very interesting shot of Karl Haas from Germany in Kabul. This took some doing, but thanks go to Mongoose Can-Do Guy Ted Chang who has been in contact with Karl.

Well, I've got all this way without hardly a reference to Christmas, but I couldn't end without wishing all of you a very merry Christmas. Special thoughts go out to the guys in the Headhunters, 4/3<sup>rd</sup> ACR, and Karl and his people in Kabul. Spare a thought for the guys who won't be home for Christmas.

Here's hoping that all your characters survive the festive season and that the experience points flow freely.

Have a good one,



*Ian*

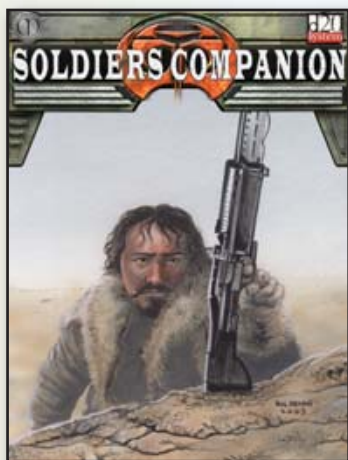


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Babylon 5 created by J. Michael Straczynski

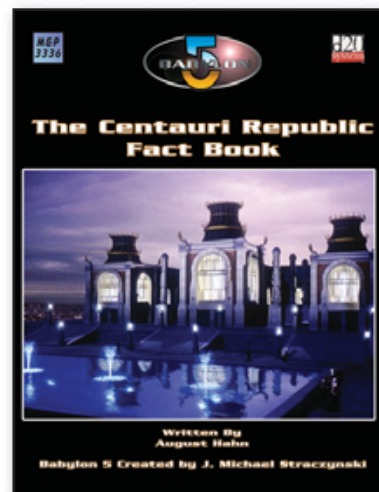
# EYE ON MONGOOSE

## *New Releases This Month*

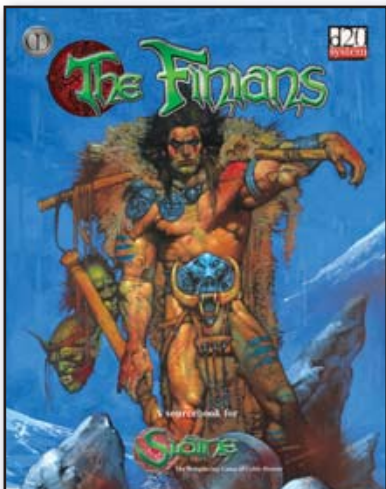


While displaced from the spotlight by officers who command the might of war vehicles – from tanks and aircraft to the WarMeks themselves, – soldiers are still an indispensable force in any army, national, private or mercenary. WarMek pilots consider infantry the bottom rung of the military ladder, used to squashing them like bugs under the tonnage of their machines and watching their manoeuvres as those of insects. But soldiers know better. They know that they are no match for a Mek in direct confrontation, but they also know that Meks just cannot do some of the tasks they carry out with their eyes closed. A WarMek may deal with difficult terrain, but it will never beat the mobility of rangers; they can infiltrate enemy positions, but not with the proficiency and sheer inconspicuousness of an advance recon squad. A WarMek's sensors may collect a lot of electronic information, but it will never beat the infiltration specialists in the depth of his discoveries. A team of WarMeks will flatten an enemy building, but it lacks the finesse of the special forces that will get inside to rescue the hostages, disable anti-mek and anti-aerial defences and leave none-the-wiser.

This 128-page rules supplement is a comprehensive collection of options for infantry-type characters in the Armageddon: 2089 roleplaying game. The characters may be soldiers or officers from any branch of the military, but they have one thing in common: they face combat face to face, unprotected by tons of armour and weaponry. Whether working for a nation, a corporation or as part of a mercenary company, soldiers are the very definition of versatility, choosing their careers in different fields of warfare, including covert operations and military intelligence as much as special forces and demolitions training.



Spanning 200 sumptuous, full-colour pages, this hardback book is the very latest in the Babylon 5 line, providing everything players and Games Masters need to know about setting scenarios or characters within the Centauri Republic. The Centauri Republic is a decaying civilisation, filled with decadence and a race whose expansionist policies changed the shape of the galaxy forever. Centauri Prime, the homeworld of the Centauri, and its many minor colonies are all fully detailed in this sourcebook. Here, fans of Babylon 5 will learn the complete history of the Centauri; their rise and fall from power, the intricacies of their hierarchy and the intrigues of their court. Players will also gain access to hundreds of new prestige classes, feats and items of equipment. Also fully detailed are the military forces of the Centauri Republic, as well as an entire social system for playing the great game on Centauri Prime. It's time to put on your best coat, brush your crest and plan the demise of your closest friend.

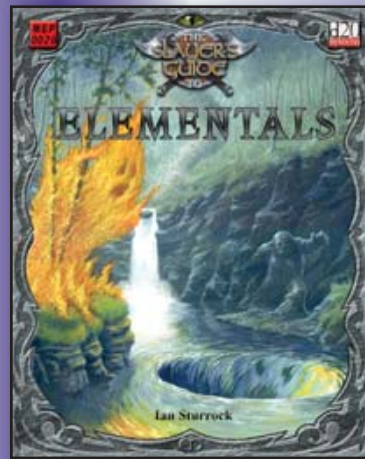


The Finians are a somewhat mysterious tribe, not so much due to deliberate efforts at obfuscation as in the case of the Tribe of the Shadows, but simply because of their geographic isolation in Alba to the far north of Tir Nan Og. What the other tribes know for certain is that the Finians are as fierce and valiant as even the Sessair in battle. This mighty Alban tribe is also noted for the dourness of its members and their relative indifference to what the other tribes regard as the essentials of life, such as fodder, fire, flax and frigg (as Sláine puts it). It is said that a Finian warrior could last a week without loving a woman, a month without food, a winter without a fire or a year without clothes such is his astonishing fortitude.

For this reason the Finians are also known as the Tribe that Endures. The Finians would sooner starve to the last man, woman and child than give in, and due to their unmatched endurance it is likely that any besiegers would run out of food or fall victim to ice-cold winter long before even the first Finian died of starvation.

This much awaited 32 page release is the fourth in Mongoose Publishing's series of Tribe books for the Sláine RPG. The Finians book concentrates especially on new character options and spells, because of two strong Finian traditions – their famed military academies and the legends of the Second Sight.

The Slayer's Guide to Elementals focuses on one of the most enduring and under-utilised of all d20 monsters – the elemental. Detailing their nature, physiology, sub-races and far more, this 128-page sourcebook continues the tradition of the Slayer's Guides to Undead, Dragons, Demons and Giants in comprehensively studying one of fantasy's most iconic images. Written by award-winning designer Ian Sturrock, the Slayer's Guide to Elementals takes a stylish look at the worlds and powers of elemental creatures.

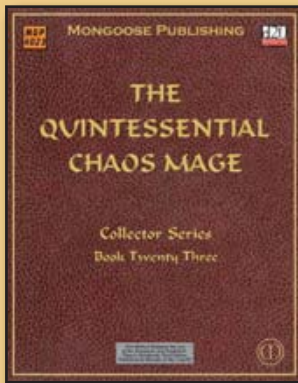


They are the likes of the moon-pale, merciless ice witch in her far-off palace of snow, whose word can open vast crevasses into which the unwary can fall and who can call up the ravaging frost worm from its lair simply by an act of will. The suntanned wanderer of the plains, in appearance a harmless old dodderer, is one of them; if he willed it, the clouds would gather heavy as ink and lacerate the earth with lightning. The aged mountain dwarf who sits quietly alone, surveying the rocks and crags of his home, could speak a handful of syllables and cause the whole side of the mountain to come hurtling down into

the valley beneath. The muttering, obese sorcerer of the swamp is more than he appears; the bones of an entire army lie beneath the placid surface of his marshes, and if asked they would tell a nightmare tale of bloodsucking insects, tangling roots and marsh mud that came alive and engulfed them.

These gentlemen and ladies are the sovereign mages, those who have learned the rare art of entering the soul of the land and binding their personal power to it. Not content with merely moving upon the face of the earth, they seek to become one with it; some to conquer, some to protect. By infusing their very essence into the country around them, they become partakers of the energies of the land, drawing upon it to achieve legendary and miraculous results. Whether they serve as governors, custodians or power-mad conquerors, they are a more potent magical force than any ordinary spellcaster could hope to be.

This 64-page volume gives players and Games Masters alike all the information they will need to integrate sovereign magic into their campaign. Full guidelines are given for the establishment of a sovereign mage's dominion and the expansion of territory, as well as a complete list of territory spells, the incantations only available to those who have this magical power of governance. Specific help is also provided for the Games Master, showing how to use these awesomely powerful beings in support of game balance and campaign drama, rather than upsetting it.



The chaos mage is the wild child of fantasy magic. A loose cannon willing to chance everything on a twist of fate. No risk is too great for a chaos mage, and no type of spell is out of bounds. This 128-page addition to the Collector's Series of Quintessential books expands the possibilities of chaotic magic to a previously untapped degree.

Written by Patrick Younts, author of *Quintessential Monk* and *Quintessential Sorcerer*, this book includes fascinating new Character like The Wild Avatar, The Philosopher Unchained and Halfling Vagabond, along with Prestige Classes such as the Chaos Architect, Chaos Alchemist, Chaos Emissary and Twister of the World's Flesh.

Burn your spellbooks and sell your familiars, it's time to just feel it.

## Caption Competition #2 Winner!



This month's competition has been one by Max September from London with:

*'Eee, you don't sweat much for a fat lass!'*

A copy of the Book of Dragons is winging its way to him.

Honourable mention for Simon Belcher of Swindon who came up with:

*'Even the greatest heroes cannot escape the readers digest prize draw troll!'*

Close, Simon, but no cigar.

## Caption Competition #5



Elvis meets B5 this month - a copy of *Macho Women with Guns* as an extra special Christmas present.

Mail your answers and details to:

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Caption Competition #2  
Signs & Portents  
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UK

Closing date: December 30th 2003

## Mongoose Hall Competition Winner

Congratulations to Sam Vail of Cambridge in England who was the first to correctly identify the adventure being used by Matt in the current Mongoose Hall debacle as *The Sinister Secret of Saltmarsh*.

Monty The Mongoose, our very own office mascot, is now residing in his bedroom.

EYE ON MONGOOSE

New Releases This Month

## FEATURE RELEASE

## OGL Horror

I jumped at the chance to write the Horror corebook. I've been running horror games (primarily the classic *Call of Cthulhu*) for years, not to mention sticking mysteries, bizarre events and twisted eldritch horrors into other games. My intent when writing this book was to take everything I'd learned from all those games and pull it all together.

The basic engine for the game is similar to *d20 Modern*. The game is class-based, but the four classes are archetypal characters in horror movies and books. There is the Ordinary Person, who wanders into the horror without any clue about what is going on. There is the Combatant, with a focus (obviously) on taking the fight to the enemy. There is the Scholar, who specialises in science or esoteric knowledge. Finally, there is the Investigator, who has the mental fortitude to deal with the things he encounters. (Each of the other classes is especially vulnerable to a particular sort of horror.)

Every horror game needs psychological mechanics to model terror and madness. *OGL Horror* uses a Horror save, which is broken into Panic, Fear and Madness. Failing each sort of save has both short-term penalties – you freeze, run like hell, start drooling, or worse – and long-term drawbacks, measured in Shock Points. One of my goals was to avoid a death spiral, where the characters grow more and more vulnerable to insanity, while also ensuring that even experienced characters still have to worry about getting scared. It also offers more options for reflecting a character's traumas in mechanics – you have to buy off your accumulated Shock Points, but there are more ways to do that than just taking various derangements and phobias.

One of the big problems with a lot of horror games is involving the characters – why me? Why not let the police handle it? – So every *OGL Horror* character has to have a number of emotional ties. These can be to people, to institutions (and there are special rules for handling organisations, conspiracies and so on), or to ideals. These ties do more than just provide a hook for the Games Master to drag your character into the horror, you can get bonuses to your rolls when fighting for your daughter's life, or to preserve the Ancient Temple of Mars, or for freedom from vampiric tyranny.

For Games Masters, *OGL Horror* has a set of rules for building monsters, as well as a nice menagerie of existing beasts. There is a long chapter on Games Mastering,

We are so excited about the release of OGL Horror that we asked the author, Gareth Hanrahan, to introduce it himself. It's time to head out for the graveyards, bark at the moon and consume the neighbours...Bwahahaha!

covering everything from the different types of horror and how to invoke them to designing a mystery and keeping the players on track. It describes different sorts of campaigns and plot seeds, how to hook the characters and how to hook the players, how to build atmosphere... twenty-five pages of nothing but Games Mastering advice. If you don't want to run a horror game after reading that chapter, I haven't done my job properly.

Special powers, such as magic or psychic abilities, are described in a separate chapter. Mechanically, they are based on feats and skills, but whether or not the players get access to such powers is up to the Games Master. In some games, the characters will be able to banish demons through the power of faith alone or call up the dead to aid them; in others, the characters will be all alone in the dark with nothing more than their own wits and skills.

The book closes with a set of ready-to-play settings so you can jump straight in or else raid them for ideas to build your own nightmares. The whole system is as modular as possible, so while the main thrust is modern-day horror and investigation, you could use basic d20 magic, or transplant the Horror save system to Mongoose's CyberNet game, or use the organisation system for a secret cabal of wizards or order of paladins.

After all, if there is one thing that this book shows, it is that Horror can be everywhere. It is not a genre, it is the twisting of any genre into something darker and scarier, something that is fundamentally *wrong*...

Goodnight out there, whatever you are.

256 pages of full colour hardback terror! Just don't bleed on the carpet.

# Write for the Mongoose

Want to write for your favourite RPG publisher? Want to get paid for it? Got a great idea for an article? If the answers to these questions are 'yes', then Signs & Portents wants to hear from you.

## Where to Start...

We will need a brief synopsis of your intended article, no more than one page long. Also include a paragraph or two of your actual writing style, so we can see whether you have what it takes and any samples of previously published work. If we like what we see, we will commission a first draft from you and you will be on your way to becoming a Mongoose contributing writer. And every article we publish will be paid for...which is nice.

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## Subject Matter

First and foremost, the article has to be based on one of our product lines. That is not as limiting as it sounds, however. The d20 fantasy family alone should give you plenty of scope. Think of all our various products, like the Quintessential series and the Slayer's Guides. With more than 80 fantasy-based books to choose from...well, you get the idea. But don't stop there. Think Babylon 5, Judge Dredd, Slaine, Armageddon 2089, not to mention the barrage of forthcoming games that we have coming. If you have ideas for any of our games we want to hear them.

So, you have chosen your game, but what do you actually write about? Scenarios are good. In fact, we love them. Give me a scenario to edit and I am a happy camper. Perhaps you want to discuss the philosophy of a game. That's good. We encourage intellectual thought process around here. If you have something meaningful to say, then try us out. If we don't like it, we *will* tell you. Think hard before you try humour though. With guys like Jonny Nexus about, you will need to be sharp if you want to break in. If you think you have what it takes, though, then feel free to try your hand. Just be prepared to be told you may not be as funny as you think you are.

If you want to write new rules for a game, with new uses for skills and maybe some new feats, then be our guest.

We cannot promise that we will like what you have done, but you will get constructive criticism in return, and not just a terse one-line rebuff.

## Editing

It is a painful fact that whatever you write, it will get edited. That is why editors exist, after all. Even this passage will have been edited. If you can get over this hurdle you are well on your way to attaining the mentality needed to be a writer. It will help if you can handle criticism as well. Take it from us – writing is a tough business. Just ask any author doing the rounds looking for a friendly publisher.

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Remember to run the article through a spell checker before you send it in. It will still get proofread, but it shows willing. Anything not spell checked will be rejected straight away.

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Tales from

## MONGOOSE HALL

Last month our heroes cleaned out a nest of smugglers, captured their boat and managed to depopulate the Winterborne militia. We ended with Casper unconscious in a cabin with a boot on his arm...

Ian Barstow

## Casper's Diary

It turns out that I'd opened the captain's treasure chest which he had thoughtfully booby-trapped with talcum powder or similar. Anyway, your favourite halfling is all right and Bulwei carries me up onto the deck, being harassed by an overly protective Guy who suspects Bulwei of having ulterior motives, but we won't go into that.

Healing everybody up, we decide to sail back into town in order to more cover ourselves in glory. The fact that none of us can sail is charitably overlooked by Matt.

Having crashed into the harbour wall and trashed the local fishing industry back to the Stone Age, guess who we meet hanging around the wharf? Eresindo the elf, of course! Who'd have thunk it? Paul claims this does not suggest an unpleasant interest in dockworkers, but rather a preternatural state of advanced knowledge.

Prior to this we had just unloaded an absolute ton of kit that we had liberated from the smugglers, making a tidy 2,500 gp each into the process. This is rough news for Eresindo (who needs a thick wallet to keep him in magic arrows) as he is not liable for a cut. A house rule at Mongoose Hall is that if you didn't show up you don't get any of the loot – or the XP. Bulwei and I go up to 3<sup>rd</sup> level, and I pick Weapon Finesse (unarmed) so that I can really get handy in a scrap. Obviously the massive d4 damage is not going to cause much trepidation in the houses of potential villains across the Realms, but beggars can't be choosers.

It is about now that I make the connection that having three skill points per level and having to bung two of them into Healing is making me rather one-dimensional. OK, so I now heal at +14, which is nice, but before long I am likely to be the most eminent physician on the continent.

This might not be so bad if I weren't cursed with a lawful good alignment (none of the body experimentation so beloved by Matt for me, unfortunately). As it is I'm beginning to look like a miniature version of Dr McCoy. What I have spare (or one point per level to you) is going into

Profession (herbalist) in the optimistic hope that one day I can discover opium.

Right, enough about me. You want to hear about the rest of the party, don't you? No? Well, unfortunately I'm contractually obliged to mention everybody else from time to time, so here goes. Bulwei is continuing to mature into a psychotic version of a certain character who will have his own RPG soon. Armed with various weapons which all have one thing in common (size, of course) he has more hit points than Mike Tyson and seems intent only on looking for the damned Snow Witch (which he has taken to calling 'Vitsch', Alex having developed an alarmingly natural Germanic accent).

Bhagwan is also coming under his fellow barbarian's influence, and they seem intent on killing everything they meet. Eresindo is bemoaning his lack of personal development (Paul drooling at the lips as he holds his downloaded copy of *'Optimise Your Character Till You Bleed'* even though he already has four feats due to his totally-not-powergamed-at-all character selections. That leaves Sabah, who obviously yearns to return to the squared circle as soon as possible, but meantime is making friends with Guy the pseudodragon, no doubt setting up a bid for ownership in the case of my unfortunate demise. I'm going to make him pay, though, by having Guy annoy him with silly demands all the time. Bananas to start with, I think...

## Ian's Roleplaying Tips #67

## 'Surprise' Meetings

Used on the right people, the following knack can become akin to prescience, and gain you a modicum of awe. Note: best used on younger and more malleable players. It goes thus - if one of the group was unable to attend the previous session you will meet up with him at the next town; however, if one or more of the party have been killed head for the nearest tavern where likely replacements will mysteriously have congregated.

So, two 3<sup>rd</sup> level characters and three 2<sup>nd</sup> level ones looking for work. It may not surprise you to discover that something is at hand. In fact, it is directly related to our dealings with the smugglers. It seems that the lizardfolk on the boat are just a small part of a tribe that has been causing problems for the local humans, and the mayor approaches us to scout out a mound that has been discovered ten miles or so out into the countryside. Just rewind a bit here, before we go on, and memorise one word: SCOUT. There, did you get it? Hold that thought – you will see why.

We decide to kit up properly for a change, and head back down to the docks to dispose of our boat. This turns into a complex business transaction, being as the locals are fixated with taxation and Bulwei is fixated with a War Elk. We just get close to selling the thing when Paul comes up with a complex scheme involving us not owning our own boat, not paying tax, and taking a percentage of the profits from something that I don't understand. There, I hope that clears it up. Suddenly, Alex smells long term profit and Bulwei forgets Elk and discovers Market Forces instead. I now own one-fifth of a boat which I don't actually own and which I never did. Sounds like a great deal.

Everybody else loads up on Yellow Liquid, the mystic stuff that makes you feel better in an instant. I also pop over to see my mage friend, Grendal, again and get ripped off for another two rubies in return for two magic twigs and a skull. The mage assures me that the skull is potent when dropped, as are the twigs when snapped. I head off well pleased, being a simpleton, although not before I have purchased a riding mount – meet Rex, the St Bernard. My menagerie is growing.

At long last we head off into the country, all mounted on splendid animals, although Bulwei would have looked better on an elk. I predict

before long he regrets his shipping investment, although he'll deny it.

As the grass gets taller and the ground muddier, it becomes clear that waders might have been a good buy. Just as I point out that we have seen no trace of any lizardfolk, about 30 enormous frog-type things ambush us. *[bullywugs, to be precise - Matt]* These are not much like the geezers on the boat, but being xenophobic we lay into them anyway.

Two rounds later Sabah is in a coma on the floor and we are surrounded. I don't need to describe yet another massive scrap to you guys. I'll concentrate on the interesting bits (all involving me, of course) starting with Rex the dog going haywire and savaging a frog to death, Guy putting three to sleep with his poisoned stinger (*Sleep* at DC12) and me going over to Sabah and thieving, sorry, acquiring all his bottles of yellow liquid to give to Rex who has drawn unwarranted attention. Eventually, several game hours later, we vanquish the massive toad-horde and lick our wounds, most of which are located on Sabah. He accuses me of theft even though I saved his measly life twice. Having given the frogs a damned good pasting we carry on until we

barely capable of upright walking, let alone moving silently. A few feet into the mound I start hearing the sound of croaking – which is clearly not a good thing. Just as I am considering what to do Bulwei comes wading past in his usual subtle style looking for trouble. Oh dear. Needless to say more butchering goes on, until eventually I lose my rag with the Jack the Ripper approach to scouting and sit in a corner to meditate.

This has a considerable effect – the rest of the party leave me there and go on. I sit about for a bit hearing the sound of some more room clearing ahead, before getting bored and following in the wake of the carnage.

Up ahead the rest of the heroes have surrounded four female lizardfolk who are clearly not up for the required brawl. This knowledge is quite obviously disconcerting for Bhagwan and Bulwei, who look keen to move on in search of potential corpses. I volunteer to stay and guard them, annoyed at the appalling brutality on show – hey, I'm the fantasy version of Dr McCoy, what were you expecting? *It's life, Bulwei, but not as you know it.*

As soon as the rest of the party go off the four females take one look at me and promptly leg it back the way I came. Not wanting to look a total twit, I chase off after them. A minute later I follow them into the room where the rest of the party are (go figure), feeling a total twit. An impressive door to our left manages to distract everybody from the series of oh-so-humorous gags I am being subjected to. This is obviously the door to somewhere important.

The two deranged barbarians go for the subtle approach of throwing a bench against it to see what happens. Oddly enough, the whole thing collapses in a mass of splinters, and we are treated to a view of a throne room of sorts, populated by the Chief Frog and some of his banged up mates. This is going to go one of two ways:

### Ian's Roleplaying Tips #439

#### *Don't Bleat*

Certain elves have a habit of wailing 'Some people have no idea of encounter levels'. This can become annoying – namely, the Games Master. By all means do unmentionable things to his snacks and drink, but don't let him see you!

find a likely looking mound which turns out to be locked. This is not tremendous news for an outfit without a rogue, but luckily Sabah whips out a scroll and the door swings open. This can be considered very impressive as he didn't actually say anything.

I get elected to go inside, based on the fact that the rest of the party are

1. We go in calmly and negotiate.
2. We butcher everything in sight and leave knowing nothing.

Pre-empting the slaughter, I rush in and attempt to communicate with the Chief Frog. Luckily, he knows his Common, and he's a tad indignant. Why have we been butchering his innocent people, he asks. Bulwei needs to be sedated at this point as it's upward of five minutes since he has killed anything. Even Bhagwan is intrigued, however, and Eresindo steps forward, presumably to patronise the lizardfolk with his elven whinging.

A few minutes later he has elicited the truth. It's not the lizardfolk who have been causing all the carnage. It's hobgoblins. A nasty tribe of them is worrying all and sundry in these parts, and the green guys have been copping the blame. We are apologetic, but the lizardfolk want compensation for all their dead. Luckily they turn out to be cheap and less than 100 gp later we are the best of mates and I talk them into accompanying us back to Winterborne to tell the mayor all that they know.

So, replete with lizardfolk, as the frogs actually appear to be, we head back to Winterborne to discuss hobgoblins. But we are not alone...I mean apart from the lizardfolk. There's elves in them there hills, as it turns out. A rather fetching huntress called Tythas, accompanied by a party of her people approaches us. They too have been having hobgoblin problems, and we soon talk her into coming back with us in the hope of forming an alliance against the nasty hobgoblins.

As we go, Bulwei regales everybody with tales of how to become the leader of a hobgoblin tribe. This appears to consist of walking up to their camp, calling out their chief and decapitating him in double quick time. Some of us are not entirely convinced about this, though. Still, he's happy.

Back at Winterborne things quickly degenerate into chaos. The locals don't believe what we have told them

to start with. Then racial tensions creep in and the humans want to boot the lizards out to sleep under the stars. Bulwei, being Bulwei, wades in (verbally, for a change) and threatens to just about kill everybody if they don't do what he tells them. This is the sort of thing we are used to, but several locals get a bit offended until we placate them with lies about what the hobgoblins intend to do to their women. Actually, it's probably quite accurate, and it did do the trick.

We turn in surrounded by a burgeoning, if rather untrained, army at our back. In the morning we begin planning. Bulwei wants to pile out and attack everything in sight –so, no surprise there then. Bhagwan, coming more and more under his influence agrees, whilst Eresindo and I want to prepare defences at Winterborne. Nobody is really very sure what Sabah Karambunai wants. By now his image has been corrupted into that fat, out-of-shape WWE wrestler, whom Rich has nicknamed the People's Armpit. Yes, it's rough, but every party has a butt of humour. That's a gimme.

You would think that the morning would bring peace and tranquillity, wouldn't you? Yeah, right. Having consumed a hearty breakfast we are interrupted with news that somebody is killing local blacksmiths. This comes as something of a surprise, as up to now not many serial killers have targeted blacksmiths as their victim of choice. This means one of two things. Either the killer is even crazier than usual or something dodgy is going on.

Assuming the latter, we take off to the nearest blacksmith's, where, sure enough, the owner is indeed dead, a black-shafted arrow protruding from his throat. The next blacksmith is found in a similar condition and, eight blacksmiths later, this is becoming serious. Clearly this was serious for the blacksmiths in question

prior to this but we're a hard-nosed bunch and not easily impressed, especially Bulwei who generally kills more people than this before breakfast.

## Ian's Roleplaying Tips #812

### *Never Take This Stuff Seriously*

This is a crucial tip, folks. Remember, no matter how committed a gamer you are; no matter how many hours of preparation you make; no matter how many charts you know by heart – this is not real. At some point you will find it is your turn to get the mickey taken out of you. You have to roll with it.

Nevertheless, we press on in the hope of finding a live blacksmith and, sure enough, we finally arrive at a smithy in working order. We surround the blacksmith to protect him while we talk, but as Bhagwan begins advising him that a career change might prolong his life he is interrupted by the arrival of a black arrowhead which appears through the front of his throat. This not only halts Bhagwan's train of thought but kills him as well.

There is a sudden, stunned silence in the room (back in Mongoose Hall, I mean). Matt had asked Rich to make a Fortitude save, which was failed, at which point Matt coldly pronounced Bhagwan to be dead. A thorough examination by Casper revealed this to be true. We were all taken aback, and Rich had to be sedated. He was really enjoying being Bhagwan and to be instantly wasted was obviously something of a surprise.

Recovering from our shock, Sabah sees a cloaked figure escaping across nearby roofs, and we take off in pursuit. A hazy figure clearly protected by magical means heads for the town walls, but we catch up with him on the parapet and he starts giving us a beating. Being as he was last seen coating his sword in goeey black fluid, nobody is too keen on getting close and going the way Bhagwan went. Bizarrely, we are

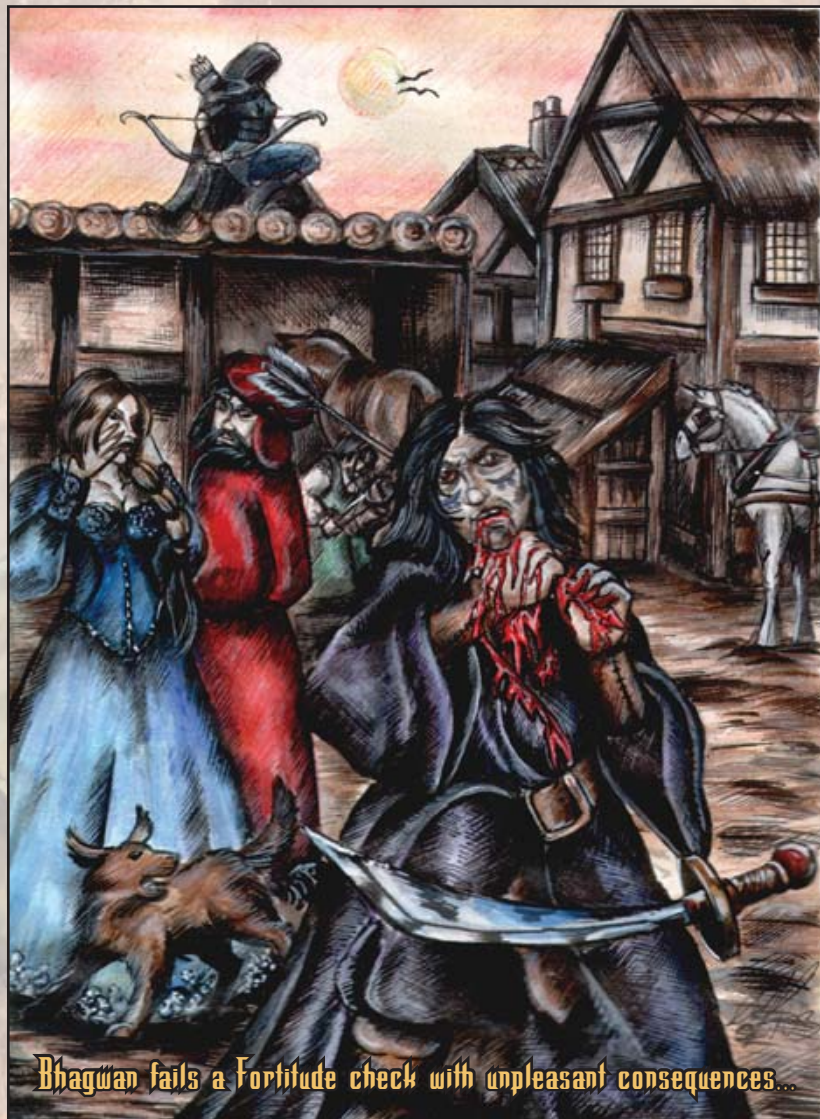
bailed out by the arrival of Guy, who flies over and stings the creature on the backside. Failing his Fortitude save, the assassin passes out, revealing himself as a sinister looking hobgoblin – surprise, surprise!

So, we bury another member of the party and wonder what to do next. Clearly these hobgoblins have pushed us too far. Killing every blacksmith in a forty-mile radius is one thing, but now things are personal. We have information that somewhere to the west is a hobgoblin camp, so we decide it's time to take a look. In traditional style we then forget to acquire any practical equipment, although we have recovered enough magic potion from the hobgoblin to start a small drug store and Bhagwan's body reveals a disproportionately high number of yellow liquid bottles. There's irony for you.

While the rest of the party goes searching for horses I whistle for Rex and head over to Grendal to get ripped off again. This time I come away with two more magic twigs in return for another ruby – good deal, huh?

A couple of hours later, accompanied by Tythas who is the only person with any idea where we are going, we ride out toward the hobgoblin army. At least that's what Tythas tells us. As far as I know we could be going anywhere. I have difficulty getting to Grendal's house. Anyway, after a hard day's riding we settle down to make camp, only to be approached by figures from two directions, although not at the same time, I hasten to add.

From the north comes a warrior, attracted by our campfire, who asks if we have any food. He declares himself to be Raygar, a fighter of no fixed abode. He is being played by our new player, Mark, the company's new finance guy. Obviously we welcome Raygar into our midst and introduce him to the burgeoning cult of the Snow Vitsch, as pioneered by Bulwei, to which we have all become unwilling converts. Raygar seems



**Bhagwan fails a Fortitude check with unpleasant consequences...**

a bit of a grumpy git, so I decide to roll over and go to sleep, only to be interrupted by a panic-stricken Rex who is being eyed up as a potential snack by a huge blue lizardfolk. I consider attacking the 7-foot critter, but offer him some meat from the fire instead. This might have something to do with the fact that this is Rich's new character, who has an unpronounceable name which I have translated as 'Slurp'.

Slurp seems satisfied, if a tad disappointed, with cooked rabbit instead of raw pooch. Obviously this sentiment isn't echoed by Rex, who is so relieved he tries to mate with Guy the pseudodragon, with the not unexpected result that a minute later he is snoring away happily with a new sting mark on his bum.

The rest of the party make Slurp sit off on his own while we discuss the implications of having a giant blue monster join the party. Eventually (or two minutes, depending on which version you prefer) we agree to allow him to tag along. It turns out that Slurp has recently escaped from the clutches of the hobgoblins and can show us the way, which is lucky. After promising not to eat any of the pack animals, he is invited to join our merry band in our quest. Sadly, he says no and leaves. . . oh, alright, he agrees. Just once you'd like that to happen though, eh? Or is it just me?

Hang on to your hats as next month the party take on the hobgoblins in their own back yard. Total Party Wipeout, anybody?

# They Call Me Mister...

**Incorporating Babylon Five Characters into Your Campaign**

*Lizard*

'I've been out of circulation. Spent the last few years doing some exploration out on the rim.'  
'Find anything interesting?'  
'Yes.'

## Mr. Morden

Mr. Morden is one of the most important and yet mysterious characters in the main storyline. Though 'on stage' relatively rarely, he is the human face of the Shadows, their ears, eyes and hands. He is seemingly unflappable, almost unemotional, though both of these are shown to be well-acted facades over the course of the series. Little is revealed about his past in the televised episodes; more details about his life and motives are found in the Vorlon and Shadows Sourcebook, coming next year.

Mr. Morden can show up in almost any place, and his frequent absences from the Babylon 5 station itself mean no special effort is required to have him meet the crew of a small freighter in a station orbiting Melat, or attend a party on Centauri Prime, or show up as a 'civilian observer' attached to a group of gropos. No matter what the players are doing, he can be there – polite, interested and always willing to help.

### As An Ally

Those players familiar with the arc may be uncomfortable getting too friendly with Morden, or they might



do so eagerly, to get a chance to be 'the bad guys', or, perhaps, they feel they might do some good if they can get close to the Shadows and learn their plans. No matter the motive, Morden makes a fine ally...at first. He demands little and pays much. He will rarely ask the players to commit grossly illegal or immoral acts, at least at first. Just deliver this data crystal. . . just turn off the sensors in docking bay 4 for five minutes and make it look like a glitch. . . distract that man for a moment. . . leave this package on that outbound transport and then get off. . . Only when they are in deep, very deep, will he begin to ratchet up the demands, and, by then, it will be too late. The players will look back and see that everything they have can be traced to him and, in turn, to the Shadows, and to defy them now would mean losing it all.

The players may also ally with Morden indirectly. He the trusted

confidante of many powerful people, and they, in turn, look to the player characters for help or service. This can be a good shock to arc-aware players. A trusted contact pleads with them to help deliver a message, telling them lives depend on it, and the players work feverishly to meet his request, avoiding or killing those sent to stop them, and the recipient turns out to be Morden, and the players becoming aware their characters have probably just done something very bad without knowing it.

It may well be that, knowing who Morden is, the players will use that knowledge to keep their characters well out of his service. While this kind of metagaming is not to be encouraged, it is often unavoidable. One solution is to never let the players know whom their characters are dealing with. Within your version of the arc, Mr. Morden could be Ms. Jones.

She has the same past as Morden (suitably tweaked to account for gender changes), was on the Icarus with Anna

Sheridan, etc. – but the players do not know this, any more than their characters

would know who Morden was or who he worked for. They may be eager to work with such a helpful and powerful patron, and by the time they realise what role she is standing in for, it is too late.

### As an Enemy

If the player characters are fully on the side of light, or just clever enough to avoid being ensnared, or simply working for someone opposed to Morden and the Shadows, they may end up on his enemies list. Morden's list of enemies is fairly short, because no name stays on it for long. Keeping the players alive after they have managed to annoy Morden and his masters is difficult. The resources the Shadows have are many; the defences any one individual can muster are few. Until open war begins, the forces of light act circumspectly, allowing many to die simply to keep the Shadows from knowing that they are known. From allowing Morden to go free in 'Shadow of Za'ha'Dum' to standing silently by as Shadow-aided Centauri crushed the Narn Regime, the major players on the side of light

demonstrated time and again that they would let some die so that all may live.

**'Nice shoes. I'll admit my knowledge of the law is somewhat limited, but . . . I believe it's tradition if you're going to hold someone, you should at least . . . charge him . . . with something.'**

Of course, something of the reverse holds true. Morden did not try to kill Sheridan, Delenn, or G'Kar, even when their opposition became evident. Some could potentially be allies; in other cases, their deaths would draw too much notice. The Shadows may see ways the player characters can be used, or may determine that the risks of direct confrontation outweigh the benefit of elimination. That said, if a player character continues to act in direct opposition to Morden, he will pay the price. The world of Babylon 5 does not reward rank stupidity in the face of a powerful enemy.

It is also possible that Morden will strike around the characters,

rather than at them. Friends, lovers or family may all suffer for the characters' actions, and the blame passed on to a third party. It must be remembered that the Shadows preach chaos and conflict, not evil for the sake of evil, and they would rather sow dissent than simply kill, if doing so is a viable option.

### Preserving the Arc

Because Morden moves around a great deal, and rarely absolutely needs to be in a particular place at a particular time, keeping the arc intact with regard to him is relatively simple. He is also hard to kill. No only is he too smart to

**'You just made a mistake, Londo. Even if my associates lose this war they have allies. They'll make sure Centauri Prime pays the price for what you've done here today.'**

directly expose himself to danger, he is guarded at all times by at least two Shadows, invisible and powerful. Few know this, and those who do hesitate to act on the information for a variety of reasons. Shadows are less powerful than Vorlons, but this is akin to noting that Poseidon is less powerful



than Zeus; if you are a mortal, the difference is negligible. He may also well have access to Shadow technology, which can provide nearly any *deus ex machina* that the Games Master wishes.

There is, however, a powerful reason for allowing Morden to die at the player's hands, in contradiction to the other or via their machinations. That is because doing so will do little to really impact the arc, and will drive home a powerful theme of the Babylon 5 universe – that destiny is bigger than its agents, and that while people matter, no one is irreplaceable. If Morden is struck down, nothing will change in the long run. A particular action may be stopped or delayed, but the momentum of the Great War will continue. Morden may have been the first and best of the Shadows' agents, but, by the time the series arc is in full swing, his network is seemingly such that another can be plucked. It is also possible other survivors of the Icarus – not just Morden and Justin – agreed to work with the Shadows, and they can be called in to replace him. Vir will not get to wave, but, beyond that, everything else proceeds without much alteration. The battle being fought in the five-year story is not one between beings, but between ideologies, and the actual living beings who live and die for those ideologies are important but not all-important. All of them matter – but not absolutely. As Delenn said in 'Comes The Inquisitor', if

she is struck down, then another will come, and another, and another. Delenn, Sheridan, G'Kar, all of them are the right people in the right place at the right time, but they are not the *only* ones who

**'Flesh is transitory, flesh is a prison, flesh is... an instrument. Flesh can be replaced. And flesh does as it's told. Or they will become most annoyed.'**

can play those parts, and neither is Morden. Killing Morden and changing nothing hammers this point home and reinforces the tone and philosophy of the series.

Even so, the Shadows will *not* take well to the elimination of Morden, any more than a human would be happy if his car was destroyed, whether or not he can afford to buy a new one. While the Shadows might be willing to let annoyances live in the hopes they can be made useful, they will be less sanguine about those who directly attack them – witness what happened to Kosh. Londo survived the killing of Morden mostly by virtue of the Shadows having fled the galaxy shortly thereafter, and, even then, he suffered for his actions for over twenty years before being granted some measure of redemption and peace.



#### Author's note

Some of this is speculative. We know Morden was powerful and widely travelled, but I really find it hard to imagine the Shadows needed only one agent, no matter how skilled, to do all their dirty work. I do not feel that assumption of other 'Mordens' out there violates established canon or is implausible in any way, but I wanted to bring up that no such individuals were ever directly mentioned.

## MR. MORDEN

### Game Stats and Biography (Season 2)

3<sup>rd</sup> Level Human Scientist/6<sup>th</sup> Level  
Shadow Agent

**Hit Points:** 31

**Initiative:** +0 (+0 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**DV:** 11 (+1 Reflex)

**Attacks:** +3 melee or +4 ranged

**Special Qualities:** Primary Area of Study (xenoarchaeology), Use Alien Artefact, Shadow-Speak, Telepathic Resistance, A Friend to Everyone x2, Sense Vorlon Presence, Never Alone x2, Regenerative Recovery,

**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +11

**Abilities:** Str 9, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 18

**Skills:** Computer Use +10, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (alien life) +13, Knowledge (xenoarchaeology) +8, Listen +5, Medical +6, Sense Motive +12, Spot +8, Technical (electronics) +8

**Feats:** Alertness, Endurance, Nerves of Steel, Iron Will, Great Fortitude



Despite having approached each of the major ambassadors during 2258, little is known about Mr Morden. Only Ambassador Mollari has had any prolonged contact with the man, benefiting from Morden's help in recovering the Eye of the Republic and the destruction of the Narn colony in Quadrant 37. Morden has made many references to his 'associates' but even Mollari has no idea who or what they are.

**Shadow-Speak:** Mr Morden has the ability to understand the strange language of his masters automatically. This ability does not allow him to speak in the Shadow language, which is impossible without Shadow physiology. However, Shadows are perfectly capable of understanding the language of any other race.

**Telepathic Resistance:** Close contact with the Shadows has granted Mr Morden with a foreboding presence that clouds the minds of telepaths, thwarting any effort to scan or otherwise make mental contact. Mr Morden gains a +5 circumstance bonus to any Will saving throw made to resist a telepathic ability. A telepath failing to use an ability against Mr Morden will be subjected to a fundamental sense of darkness and foreboding, penetrating into his mind and shaking his grip on reality. The telepath will suffer 2d6 points of subdual damage, ignoring any Damage Reduction.

**A Friend to Everyone:** Mr Morden's Charisma score includes a +4 inherent bonus gained through service to his mysterious masters.

**Sense Vorlon Presence:** Mr Morden is able to sense when anything influenced by the Vorlons is close by. Whenever a Vorlon, Vorlon agent or item of Vorlon technology comes within 30 ft. of him, he may make a Wisdom check (DC 15). Success will result in him feeling distinctly uneasy, signifying that a Vorlon presence is close. He gains no other information such as location or identity.

**Never Alone:** Mr Morden is never alone. Two Shadows, mysterious creatures with abilities that make engaging them in combat a ludicrous concept for any mortal being, are present at all times to advise him and protect their collective interests. The Shadow companions remain invisible but are under no control – if anything, it will require Mr Morden to perform tasks. Under no circumstances will these terrible creatures reveal themselves before 2260; there is too much at stake.

**Regenerative Recovery:** Mr Morden has several small modules of Shadow technology implanted within his body, greatly boosting his own immune system and allowing him to recovery from terrible injuries very quickly. Mr Morden always stabilizes automatically if taken below 0 hit points, assuming he is not slain outright. Also, his natural healing rate for both hit point and ability damage is doubled.



# Armageddon 2089

## ICQA Field Test

### #5505

# BLIZZARD

## CryoTech Suppressor

August Hahn

*There is always that moment, that split second between flipping the switch on some experimental new weapon and finding out whether it is going to work or blow up and take half your Mek with it, when time seems to stand still. Every time I strap on some new tech, that moment seems to get longer. One of these days, I'll just pull the trigger and get lost in between ticks of the clock. They'll scrape my ashes off what's left of my cockpit and say I'd finally pushed my luck one field test too far...*

*But what the hell? Nobody lives forever, especially out here.*

**T**hough they are not often used, fire suppression systems can spell the difference between survival in the field and burning away to a twisted steel skeleton on the battlefield. The systems that exist in wide scale service in 2089 are pieces of tried and true fire fighting equipment, but there are companies who have tried to break into the field of fire suppression with new products before. Each time, they have failed because the equipment that exists is either too efficient to warrant refit or too integral to the Meks they come equipped in to justify replacement.

The Blizzard CryoTech Suppressor is a breakaway product in the field because its design allows it to escape both of these pitfalls. The CryoTech is a secondary system that exists in tandem with other fire suppression equipment, greatly improving a Mek's chances of surviving a catastrophic fire. By super-cooling the Mek's inner structure, it also improves the efficiency of its electronic components and weapon systems. This additional feature makes it a potentially attractive piece of after-market equipment, though its side effects may keep it off the front lines for some time.

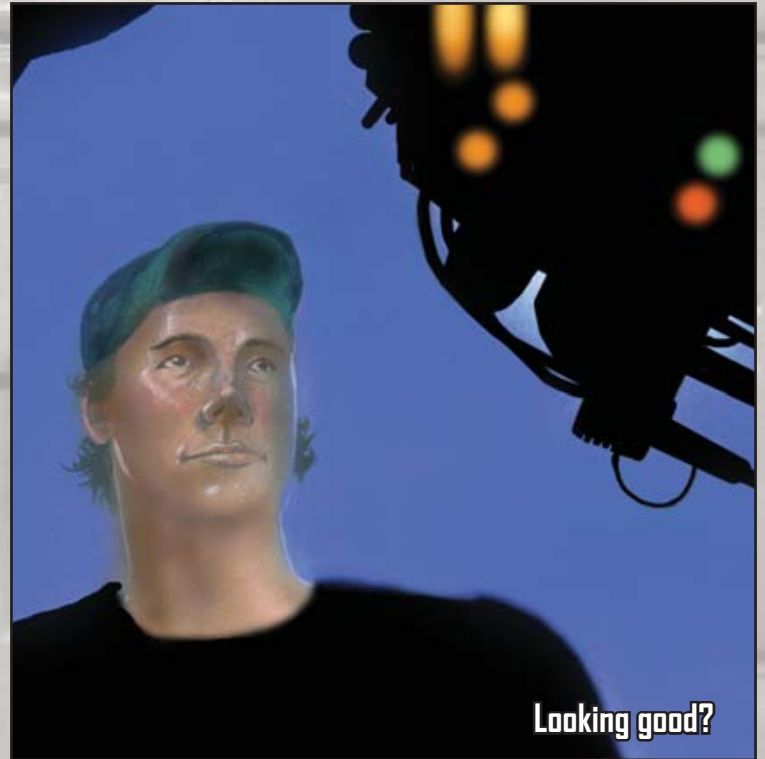
## The Set-up

Unlike the Brimstone project from Field Test #2, this test is not well advertised or high scale. The corporation running the test, Blizzard Chemical, is a start-up business with no other products on the market currently. As such, they have not developed a pool of regular field testers and have no field presence to speak of. This makes them perfect for a small group of beginning mercenaries to 'get their feet wet', so to speak, in the world of professional field-testing. It also means that their adherence to the normal standards and practices of field testing is less than polished, but that will all come out in play.

The first hint the player characters should get that the company is not your typical high tech corporation is that the initial acceptance phase of the field test is practically a given. They apply for a testing position and

get accepted without so much as a preliminary interview or background check. The player characters do not even have to make a Diplomacy roll for field test acceptance, and they will be taken on board regardless of affiliations or past history. Even failure to return solid feedback or field test equipment will not bar them from the project, something that should make them seriously wary of Blizzard's motivations.

Their fears are not initially fairly founded. The company is not looking to pull anything on them or give them intentionally faulty equipment. Blizzard has just never run a field test before, has no real idea how to conduct an interview process and does not wish to turn away potential customers by refusing them the chance to test their new system. The people at Blizzard may be inexperienced, but they are intelligent enough to know that at this early



Looking good?

stage of development in the CryoTech project, any feedback is useful, even something as basic as reading about a detonating WarMek in a local paper when their testing staff fails to report in.

Once the player characters accept their commission, which comes with a basic stipend for compliance, they will receive a drop shipment of the suppressor anywhere in the world that cargo planes from the European Federation can fly to. Blizzard is based out of France, though many of its key researchers are actually renegade European sympathisers from the Nordic League. The suppressor system will be for whichever single Mek size the player characters request and should be easily retro-fitted to any

Mek with a fire extinguisher system of its own (one of which is required for the CryoTech system to work at all).

The stipend is 1,000 in either American or European currency for each field report that includes an after-action involving the suppressor activating, no matter how it responds or how poorly it works. These can be submitted electronically and there is no limit to how long the system can be kept, though the company will only pay for one report a week and each report must involve real combat conditions.

Because Blizzard wants to see their project in action, they will happily accept groups that engage in any kind of fieldwork and do not care about

the politics or tactics involved. This makes the test perfect for virtually any kind of Armageddon 2089 game from front-line combat teams to chemical warfare and environmental terrorists. Blizzard does not officially condone any kind of combat, keeping their involvement with the mercenaries that accept their field tests strictly limited to the CryoTech. As they currently offer nothing else for WarMeks to mount, their liability is neatly covered.

### The Catch

In this instance, the catch involved in this field test is all about the product itself. The CryoTech is, in field test parlance, an 'early Alpha' product. It is past the design stage, but its is

## CryoTech Suppression/Enhancement System – Blizzard Chemicals

The CryoTech S/ES is an improved form of fire suppression system that works in conjunction with other such equipment, making them more efficient and better able to combat the spread and growth of system fires inside a WarMek and along its outer surface. Utilising liquid nitrogen generated from the atmosphere and stored in shielded internal tanks, the CryoTech also has the advantage of being able to supercool a WarMek from the inside, allowing it to operate more efficiently.

### CryoTech Suppression/Enhancement System

System	Power Points	Hardpoints*	Mass	Bonus	Cost \$
CryoTech S/ES - Tiny	1	0	0	+4	5,000
CryoTech S/ES – Small	2	0	0	+4	25,000
CryoTech S/ES – Medium	3	.5	.5	+3	45,000
CryoTech S/ES – Large	4	.5	1	+3	65,000
CryoTech S/ES – Huge	5	1	2	+2	85,000
CryoTech S/ES – Gargantuan	6	1	3	+2	125,000



\* CryoTech's hardpoint requirement must be paid from the torso hardpoints of the Mek it is mounted in, as the basic system must be mounted in the torso itself.

Activating the CryoTech in a fire suppression mode is automatic and happens every time the Mek's fire extinguishers turn on. The user of the system can turn the CryoTech off at will, overriding the automatic activation, but turning it back on imparts a 1d4 round delay while it reinitialises. During this time period, it will not add its bonus to the Mek's extinguisher rating.

A user can also turn the CryoTech on intentionally, using it to supercool the chassis of the Mek and potentially improve its performance. This is a standard action and provides the following bonuses, all of which last for 1d4+1 rounds. The CryoTech can only be used to do this once per battle; more frequent use would freeze the expellers and ruin the system completely.

- +5 improvement to the Mek's infrared signature.
- Automatic suppression of any fires that begin during these rounds.
- +2 to all Scan and Electronic Warfare skill checks made using the Mek's systems.
- +1 increase to the bonus provided by any targeting system.



Just remember, not *every* ICQA Field Test goes to plan...

hardly a polished item by any stretch and its function is what could kindly be considered 'erratic'. Fortunately, the CryoTech is not a first priority system and the chances for it catastrophically failing are slim. They exist, and a pilot could possibly have his life endangered by the cooling system, but it is not at all likely.

Unfortunately, the fact that the CryoTech system works directly against the components and internal build of the WarMek means that while it is not likely to endanger the pilot, it can have some severely detrimental effects on that equipment, compromising the performance of vital components and even, in its most severe malfunctions, damaging or destroying them. A thousand dollars a report might sound nice at first, but when the nature of that report is explaining how the Blizzard CryoTech ruined a \$37,500 Chebb Advanced system, it is not quite as lucrative as it might have seemed.

Of course, the CryoTech might work as advertised as well, causing a WarMek to work at considerably enhanced levels of efficiency. While these improvements can certainly not be depended upon, they make for a nice bonus in the middle of combat. A sizeable bonus to a Mek's extinguisher rating is a nice thing, and it is even nicer to have a bonus to get a temporary improvement to one's infrared signature or Scan checks as well.

This improvement is made possible because of a hypercooling condenser that generates liquid nitrogen by pulling it from the atmosphere around the WarMek and storing it for later use. The nitrogen is applied in microblasts to areas of the Mek that are on fire, smothering them. Because nitrogen is a remarkably non-reactive gas, it makes an excellent buffer for internal components and keeps fires from spreading to other systems. In principle, the CryoTech system is an

excellent advancement in extinguisher technology. As a systems booster, unfortunately, it has a long way to go.

## The Complications

The CryoTech system is far from perfected. It works in theory and all of the initial lab tests have more or less ended with successful runs, but the suppressor and condenser have never been fitted into a WarMek and used during full-fledged combat before. While the engineers at Blizzard *think* it should work flawlessly, the line between theoretical perfection and mechanical efficiency is a very wide one indeed and can usually be measured in ruined Meks.

Every time the CryoTech is activated, either automatically when a fire breaks out on the test bed WarMek or intentionally to give the Mek a boost, the chart below has to be consulted. If the activation occurred automatically, the check is made without bonuses or penalties, but intentional activation carries a variable 1d4 circumstance penalty rolled each time activation occurs. This variable penalty cannot be negated through technical maintenance or experimentation as noted below; it is inherent in this early prototype of the Suppression system.

Unlike most other field tests, the player characters are encouraged to make adjustments and tinker with the CryoTech. While anything they do becomes part of the company's research and is not directly compensated, the player characters will benefit from their hard work by reducing the chance that a simple field test will freeze thousands or millions of dollars worth of equipment into cracked, useless scrap. A successful Technical skill check at a DC 20 will provide a temporary +2 bonus to the activation chart check; this bonus only affects the next check. A Technical skill check against a DC 30 will make this bonus permanent.

The CryoTech Activation Chart

D20 roll	Result	CryoTech Bonus
-4	<b>Total System Freeze.</b> The CryoTech is ruined and will have to be replaced (which Blizzard Chemical will do free of charge) and 1d4 random components/weapons in the WarMek's torso are completely destroyed. This cannot affect the Mek's reactor, but if there are not enough systems in the torso to affect, the remaining number of ruined systems must be taken from the head as well.	Fire is automatically suppressed.
-3 to -1	<b>System Lock-up.</b> The CryoTech's condensers burn out and the system fails to activate. This system failure also destroys the Mek's fire extinguisher and has a 50% chance of destroying any one other system in the Mek's torso due to a cascade of electrical overloads.	Fire cannot be suppressed this round.
0	<b>Nothing Happens.</b> The CryoTech conflicts with the Mek's fire extinguisher system and neither of them respond. There is a 50% chance that each time either of them are activated during the current battle, they will instead fail completely and burn out, becoming ruined.	Fire cannot be suppressed this round.
1-3	<b>Superfreezing of the Mek's Structure.</b> The nitrogen jets saturates the WarMek's internal components causing the metal load-bearing members to freeze up. This makes them brittle, inflicting 1d4 points of damage to the Structure Points of every location except the WarMek's head, which automatically takes 1.	-2 to normal rating.
4-6	<b>Haywire.</b> The system loses control of its directional jets and coolant goes everywhere, even places it should not. The outside of the Mek freezes over and coolant dumps directly into the Mek's cockpit. This inflicts 5d6 cold damage to the pilot and 4d6 points of armour damage to every location on the Mek, front and back.	+1d4 to the extinguisher rating.
7-8	<b>Weak Response.</b> The CryoTech works, but only barely. It aids in fire suppression if used in that role, but does not offer any more direct bonuses when activated intentionally other than a +1 to Scan and Electronic Warfare checks for 2 rounds.	+1 to extinguisher rating.
9-11	<b>Standard Effect.</b> The CryoTech works as designed, offering exactly what its equipment description lists above.	Normal bonus.
12-14	<b>Enhanced Efficiency.</b> While the boosting properties of the unit are not any better than what is listed, the unit has a strong ability to suppress fires, doing so remarkably well.	+2 to normal bonus.
15-17	<b>Lasting Effect.</b> The roll for the duration of the unit's boosting ability gains an additional +2 equipment bonus, making it last from 3 to 7 rounds.	Normal bonus.
18-19	<b>Really, Really Cold.</b> Fires do not stand a chance when this unit kicks in. The Mek suddenly gains a +10 enhancement to its Infrared signature and all current fires go out immediately. The enhancement fades at one point lost per round.	Fire is automatically suppressed.
20	<b>Flawless Operation.</b> The unit functions exactly as theorised and for as long as it normally can. The duration roll for the boost is assumed to be a 4, allowing the Mek to benefit from the CryoTech's boosting effects for 5 full rounds.	Normal bonus.
21	<b>Superlative Operation.</b> The optimised system functions better than the technicians dreamed possible. The system provides a +4 bonus to Scan and Electronic Warfare checks and a +2 increase in all targeting system bonuses. These supersede the bonuses the system normally offers.	+4 to normal bonus.
22	<b>Mechanical Perfection.</b> The system operates as per the '21' result on this chart and has been rendered immune to possible mechanical failure in the future. Intentional activation now only results in a -1 penalty instead of a -1d4 and any damage inflicted by the system (as per the Haywire and Superfreezing results) is reduced by 50%. This effect can only occur once; all future rolls are treated as '21' instead.	Permanent +1 increase to system's normal bonus.

*IWN News Brief: Give Us Five Minutes, We'll Give You The World.*



Date: April 19, 2089

Keywords: Blizzard Chemicals, CryoTech Suppressor System, Fire Extinguishing, WarMek

Blizzard Chemicals, a company known previously for contract work done for the European Federation in the bioweapon and chemical warfare fields, has made its first move into the lucrative and difficult WarMek market with a new product currently in the research and development phase of completion. While inside sources say the product has already gone to the testing stage, other sources reveal that the item, a special form of cooling equipment used for component and superstructure thermal regulation, is far from ready for direct field use and can be considered extremely unstable.

Given the company's track record for releasing its products before adequate tests have been done on their dependability in the field, most market analysts are sceptical about the new CryoTech Suppression System's potential. Others applaud Blizzard Chemical's decision to outsource their testing to free agents and mercenaries. 'We have seen great advances in military technology this year, mostly due to the pressures of combat scenarios and emergency implementation. Blizzard can't help but benefit from this.'

*IWN: Nothing but Cold Facts and Hot News, When You Need It Most.*

# Blood of the Earth

Ian Sturrock

It's probably not going to come as much surprise that *Blood Magic* has been one of our most popular *Encyclopaedia Arcane* releases - nothing like a spot of gore, after all. May of you have asked us if we had anything else up our sleeves, and it just so happens. . .

## Blood Rites

It is said that the first blood magicians spilled blood onto the earth in placation of the weird mountain-gods they had themselves half-invented, half-discovered. Though the primal mountains are rarely worshipped any longer as gods, even by most blood magicians, there remains a branch of blood magic devoted solely to spilling blood onto the earth, drawing power directly from the interaction of the sacrifice and the natural world. Blood magicians who learn something of this branch of the bloody art rival evil druids in their bloodlust and their understanding of the way to combine that bloodlust with the magic of the earth.

This practice can produce a number of effects, all of them based firmly on the principles enshrined in the Blood Sacrifice chapter of *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Blood Magic*. It will be noted that every bloodrite listed in this article requires selection of the Blood Sacrifice feat as a prerequisite, since in effect all Blood of the Earth magic is an extension of the sacrificial magic path begun with that feat.

## rites of the walls

Perhaps the best-known bloodrites associated with the Blood of the Earth are *blood foundation* and *blood ghost*. These draw on the tradition of spilling blood prior to constructing a stronghold or other building. This tradition is as ancient as construction itself, with many an old builder or plasterer telling tales of how a building must 'have its blood' before it can be truly finished.

### Bloodrite: Blood Foundation

**Components:** V, S, M  
**Casting Time:** Ten minutes  
**Range:** Touch  
**Area:** 10 ft. x 10ft.  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Saving Throw:** None  
**Knowledge (blood magic) Check:** DC 15  
**Prerequisites:** Blood Sacrifice  
**XP Cost to Learn:** 500 XP  
**XP Cost to Perform:** 25 XP  
**Hp Cost to Perform:** 0

*Blood foundation* is a preparatory bloodrite used before building a blood magician's stronghold or other structure. The blood magician slays a sacrificial victim and spreads its blood from one end to the other of the spell's area, daubing the earth with the life fluid. This causes the spell's area to retain something of the magical energy of the victim's spirit, greatly boosting the defensive value and general solidity of any structure that is built on it. Any building constructed in the area gains a +5 to Hardness and a +10 to Break DC, and can still be magically treated (see *Core Rulebook II*) to further improve its toughness.

**Material Component:** One sacrificial victim of minimum 3 Intelligence.

### Bloodrite: Blood Ghost

**Components:** V, S, M  
**Casting Time:** One day  
**Range:** Touch  
**Area:** 10 ft. x 10 ft.  
**Duration:** See below  
**Saving Throw:** See below  
**Knowledge (blood magic) Check:** DC 22  
**Prerequisites:** Blood Sacrifice, Tormented Sacrifice, *blood foundation*, *create undead*  
**XP Cost to Learn:** 600 XP  
**XP Cost to Perform:** 120 XP  
**Hp Cost to Perform:** 0

This improved version of *blood foundation* requires the ritualist to

spend an entire day torturing the victim to death, spilling the blood not just on the earth but also into the cement or mortar that is to be used to build the structure planned for the area. These raw materials must be used within the day immediately following the spell's casting and, when combined with the usual stones, bricks or other construction materials, allow the building of a structure by the usual manual means, either by the ritualist or by an ordinary worker with ranks in the Profession (builder) skill.

Once the magically empowered materials have been used to construct a wall or other building in the bloodrite's area, the full power of the bloodrite comes into effect. The structure is enhanced just as though a *blood foundation* had been cast on it, and furthermore the victim's spirit is entombed indefinitely in the stone. Any creature that destroys the structure will unleash that spirit as a ghost (see *Core Rulebook III*). On materialising for the first time, when the structure has been destroyed, the ghost makes an immediate Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1 per year that has passed since its death + Charisma bonus of ritualist). If it fails, it will immediately seek revenge on the creature that destroyed the structure (or, in the ghost's terms, defiled its gravesite), attempting to destroy it and tirelessly tracking it if it flees. If the ghost succeeds in its saving throw, it will instead have the memory and strength of purpose to seek out the ritualist who initially tortured it to death.

**Material Component:** One sacrificial victim of minimum 3 Intelligence, plus at least 500 pounds of unset mortar or cement.

## rites of the scapegoat

The ancient tradition of the scapegoat involves transferring the guilt or other problems of an entire community onto

a single sacrificial creature, which is then slain. Its blood drains out into the earth, along with whatever ailed its killers. In these modern days, most communities have clerics to deal with their problems, and so modern blood magicians have adapted the old ways to focus on dealing with individual difficulties rather than those of a whole tribe. Occasionally, though, it becomes necessary to sort out an entire village's difficulties, at which point the *mass blood scapegoat* bloodrite is used.

**Bloodrite: Blood Scapegoat**

**Components:** V, S, M  
**Casting Time:** Ten minutes  
**Range:** Touch  
**Subject:** One creature  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Saving Throw:** None (harmless)  
**Knowledge (blood magic) Check:** DC 20  
**Prerequisites:** The ability to cast 5<sup>th</sup>-level arcane spells, Blood Sacrifice, Tormented Sacrifice, Bleed Dry  
**XP Cost to Learn:** 500 XP  
**XP Cost to Perform:** 100 XP  
**Hp Cost to Perform:** 0

*Blood scapegoat* can be used to duplicate the effects of any or all of the following spells: *remove curse*, *neutralise poison*, *atonement* and *cure disease*, as though cast by a cleric of the ritualist's level. Only one creature can be affected by *blood scapegoat*, but he can be affected by more than one of the spells if needed.

**Material Component:** One sentient sacrificial victim of minimum Hit Dice equal to the combined spell levels of the spells duplicated (as cast by a cleric). The victim must be killed slowly over the casting time.

**Bloodrite: Blood Scapegoat, Mass**

**Components:** V, S, M  
**Casting Time:** One hour  
**Range:** Touch  
**Subject:** Two or more creatures bound by blood bonds  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Saving Throw:** None (harmless)  
**Knowledge (blood magic) Check:** DC 24  
**Prerequisites:** The ability to cast 7<sup>th</sup>-level arcane spells, *blood scapegoat*,

knowledge of at least one bloodrite from the Bonds of Blood chapter  
**XP Cost to Learn:** 250 XP  
**XP Cost to Perform:** 250 XP  
**Hp Cost to Perform:** 0

*Mass blood scapegoat* works as *blood scapegoat*, except that any number of subjects may be affected, so long as they are all bound together by blood bonds of any sort. For example, an entire tribe bound by the *blood tribe* bloodrite could be affected by *mass blood scapegoat*.

**Material Component:** One sentient sacrificial victim of minimum Hit Dice equal to four times the combined spell levels of the spells duplicated (as cast by a cleric).

**BARRIER RITES**

Even in supposedly civilised regions, rulers often nail their slain foes to sacrifice poles or impale their still-living bodies on stakes, hoping by this example to discourage others from criminality, invasion or rebellion. This is little more than a memory of the time when such an action had true magical power; the power of the *blood boundary*.

**Bloodrite: Blood Boundary**

**Components:** V, S, M  
**Casting Time:** See below  
**Range:** Touch  
**Area:** A line on the ground, up to 10 ft. long per level in highest-level arcane spellcaster class  
**Duration:** One hour per level in highest-level arcane spellcaster class  
**Saving Throw:** Yes (negates)  
**Knowledge (blood magic) Check:** DC 18  
**Prerequisites:** Blood sacrifice, the ability to cast 4<sup>th</sup> level arcane spells  
**XP Cost to Learn:** 400 XP  
**XP Cost to Perform:** 100 XP  
**Hp Cost to Perform:** 0

This bloodrite creates a magical barrier along the ground where the ritualist draws a line in the blood of the material component to stop the passage of creatures of the same species. The line can be any shape, with straight lines (to close off a doorway, ravine or other route) or circles (to protect against or imprison the creatures affected by the

spell) being the most common. The line has the following effects:

- Any creatures of the same species as the victim that approach within 20 feet of the line must make a Will saving throw or become frightened (flee as well as they can, -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, checks and saving throws) for the duration of the spell.
- A creature of the same species as the victim that attempts to cross the line sustains 1d8 damage per level in the ritualist highest-level arcane spellcaster class, and is unable to cross. A Fortitude saving throw may be made and, if successful, the creature crosses and suffers only half damage. The type of damage may be defined when the spell is cast, with the ritualist selecting from the following: fire, electrical, or cold.

The casting time is whatever time it takes to sacrifice the victim, plus the amount of time it takes to draw the line. Drawing the line is done one round at a time. During each round of the casting time, the ritualist can draw as much of the line as he can move in a move action, which takes up the entire round (as a move action to move the length of the line, and a standard action to draw it).

**Material component:** One sacrificial creature of the same species the ritualist desires to create a barrier against – its blood is used to mark the barrier.

New Prestige Classes

Though blood magic in general is open to all arcane spellcasters without the need to take on an additional prestige class, there will always be a few specialists who desire to devote their entire lives to the bloody art.

## Blood Gardener

Blood gardeners specialise in the semi-magical creation of monstrous plants, using bad seeds to grow flowers of evil. The blood gardener does not truly care for nature, as might a druid, but rather has a mad scientist's approach to his creations. He creates a vast and deadly garden of poisonous herbs and plant creatures, nourishing them on human blood. The blood gardener has only limited control over this blood garden, often finding himself in almost as much peril from it as any would-be intruder. Blood gardeners tend to spend most of their time tinkering with their gardens, though on an adventure the blood gardener's plant companion can make an effective ally, and several of his other class features can also be useful outside his blood garden.

Blood gardeners are most commonly multiclassed sorcerer/druids, though the arcane spellcasting requirement can also be met by wizards and the *speak with plants* requirement by rangers. When a druid or ranger does become a blood gardener, it is usually either because he was always evil through and through, or because he has somehow been corrupted, no longer really caring a fig for protecting the natural world. The occasional bard can also make an effective blood gardener, if he specialises in the particular areas of knowledge required, since of course the bard is the only character class to gain *speak with plants* as an arcane spell. Barbarians, clerics, fighters, monks, paladins and rogues rarely become blood gardeners, since the specialised skills and spells necessary are not easily available to them.

**Hit Die:** d4.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a blood gardener, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any evil.

**Feats:** Blood Sacrifice.

**Skills:** Knowledge (nature) 7 ranks, Knowledge (blood magic) 8 ranks.

**Spellcasting:** Ability to cast 2<sup>nd</sup> level arcane spells, and *speak with plants*.

**Bloodrite:** Must know *blood foundation*.

### Class Skills

The blood gardener's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (poisons) (Int), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (blood magic) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Profession (brewer) (Wis), Profession (gardener)



(Wis), Profession (herbalist) (Wis), Profession (torturer) (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Survival (Wis). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

**Skill points at each level:** 4 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the blood gardener prestige class.

#### Weapon and Armour Proficiency:

The blood gardener gains no new weapon, armour or shield proficiencies. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist,

Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand and Tumble.

**Blood Garden:** Every blood gardener must select an area that is to be his blood garden. He designates the centre of the blood garden by sacrificing a sentient creature and bathing the ground with its blood, then growing a single plant of his choice from seed on that site. This is known as the Heart of the blood garden, and if it is ever destroyed the garden will begin to wither and die. Tending the Heart to full growth takes two months, as its development is magically accelerated. Over that two-month period the blood gardener must sacrifice at least one sentient victim per week to the Heart, and if the garden is to continue to flourish he must thereafter continue to sacrifice one victim per week. A blood gardener can only have one blood garden at a time. Blood garden is a supernatural ability.

A 1<sup>st</sup> level blood gardener's garden extends out to an area 100 feet in diameter, centred on the Heart. The blood garden may later be increased in size if desired (see below). Within the blood garden, he can grow a variety of poisonous and other deadly plants, including man-eaters, as well as creating his own monstrous hybrids at the Games Master's discretion.

The garden may contain up to (blood gardener's Profession – gardener skill x diameter of blood garden in feet/10) poisonous plants, and (blood gardener's class level x diameter of blood garden in feet/10) HD worth of plant creatures, though he will need to grow the plant creatures individually using his Blood Roots class feature (see below). The plant creatures are not necessarily under his control unless he makes use of his other class features such as Control Plants or Plant Companion, and many an absent-minded blood gardener has been devoured by his own creations. For example, a 6<sup>th</sup> level blood gardener with 11 ranks in Profession (gardener) and a 400 feet diameter blood garden may have up to 11 x 400/10 = 440 poisonous

plants, and  $6 \times 400/10 = 240$  HD worth of plant creatures in his blood garden.

Every time the blood gardener goes up a level, the maximum possible diameter of the garden increases by 100 feet, though the blood gardener is not obliged to extend it in that manner. For every 100 feet it is extended, the blood gardener must sacrifice at least one additional victim per week to his Heart. For example, a 7<sup>th</sup> level blood gardener could have a blood garden of up to 700 feet diameter, but only if he was able to sacrifice seven victims a week to the Heart of his garden. He may prefer to keep it at a more manageable and less noticeable 300 feet diameter, with only a requirement to sacrifice three victims per week to the Heart.

**Blood Roots:** Blood gardeners learn to nourish plants physically, magically, and spiritually alike with the blood of various sacrificed creatures. The blood gardener can select up to one plant or plant creature in his blood garden per level to have special treatment. He must sacrifice a minimum of one sentient victim per month to provide blood for this creature specifically, in addition to any sacrificed to the Heart. The plant grows at a phenomenal rate and to a great size. A plant creature so nourished will grow at a rate of one HD per month until it reaches its maximum possible HD. This counts towards the maximum HD allowed in the blood garden as usual. All uses of Blood Roots are supernatural abilities.

From 3<sup>rd</sup> level onwards, any plants nourished regularly in this way rapidly shift alignment towards the blood gardener's own alignment. This will even affect creatures such as treants, whose alignment is listed as 'always neutral good.' The utterly corrupting magic of the blood gardener is sufficient to turn even these creatures to evil.

From 5<sup>th</sup> level, the blood gardener's research allows him to grant selected plants human-like levels of intelligence. By sacrificing an additional sentient creature to the plant during its first month of growth, he raises its Intelligence score by 1. He can repeat this up to once for each further month of growth the plant has until reaching

its maximum HD, thus raising its intelligence to potentially very high levels.

From 7<sup>th</sup> level, the blood gardener may add the dreaded vampiric thorns to his creations, shaping their leaves and branches to look and be as deadly and bloodthirsty as their intentions. He must sacrifice an additional 2d6 sentient victims to it during the first month, and it gains the additional special attack of vampiric thorns. Any melee attack it makes drains 1d4 Con from the target in addition to any other effects it may have. The plant creature immediately regenerates an amount of damage equal to the Con lost by the target. This is an extraordinary ability.

From 9<sup>th</sup> level, the blood gardener can grow his selected plants to prodigious sizes and levels of health. By sacrificing four sentient victims per month rather than one, he can ensure that the HD gained that month by the plant is not rolled, but is instead always maximum hit points.

**Speak with Plants:** All blood gardeners can *speak with plants* at will, as though using a *speak with plants* spell cast at their own caster level. This is a spell-like ability.

**Spells:** For each level gained in this prestige class except 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, the blood gardener gains an additional level of arcane spellcasting ability. To determine the number of spells the blood gardener can cast and his caster level, add his levels in this prestige class to his levels in his other arcane spellcasting class. For example, a 16<sup>th</sup> level bard/3<sup>rd</sup> level blood gardener prepares and casts spells as a 19<sup>th</sup> level bard. Note that blood gardeners never gain additional levels of divine spellcasting ability, since former druids or rangers who take this path must turn their backs on the more positive, nurturing uses of their craft.

**Control Plants:** A blood gardener of 2<sup>nd</sup> level or higher can turn, rebuke or command creatures of the plant type, so long as none of said creatures have an Intelligence higher than 2. The blood gardener controls plants as though a cleric of twice the blood gardener's level turning undead. This

is a supernatural ability that can be used (blood gardener's class level + Charisma bonus) times per day.

At 6<sup>th</sup> level, the blood gardener may use this ability at will.

At 10<sup>th</sup> level, control plants may be used to turn, rebuke or command intelligent plant creatures.

**Poison Use:** A blood gardener of 3<sup>rd</sup> level or higher can prepare and use poisons with no risk of poisoning himself, so long as those poisons are of herbal or plant origin. A blood gardener using a non-plant-derived poison risks poisoning himself as usual. Furthermore, from 3<sup>rd</sup> level onwards all poisonous plants picked from the blood gardener's own blood garden have a +1 innate bonus to their save DCs. This rises to +2 at level, and to +3 at 9<sup>th</sup> level. Poison use is an extraordinary ability.

**Plant Companion:** At 4<sup>th</sup> level, the blood gardener gains a plant companion. Unlike the animal companions of rangers and druids, the plant companion is more of a servant than a friend – the blood magician can control it utterly by concentrating, and even when he does not control it directly it will obey him utterly, even so far as sacrificing itself at his whim. However, the blood gardener may only have as his plant companion a plant he has himself grown from seed in his blood garden. Otherwise, plant companions function exactly as do animal companions (see *Core Rulebook I*), including gaining special features and ability bonuses as the blood gardener gains levels, and being dismissed so that a new plant companion can be gained (so long as there is an appropriate plant in the blood garden). Plant companion is an extraordinary ability.

A 4<sup>th</sup> level blood gardener may select either a violet fungus or phantom fungus as a plant companion. At 7<sup>th</sup> level, he may select a tendriculos or shambling mound. At 10<sup>th</sup> level, he may select a treant. The Games Master may allow him to select an alternate plant creature from his own campaign, so long as it is of similar power. Note that for a plant creature which usually



## The Blood Gardener

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells/day
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Blood Garden, Speak with Plants, Blood Roots	-
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Control Plants	+1 level of existing class
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Blood Roots (seeds of evil), Poison Use	+1 level of existing class
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Plant Companion	+1 level of existing class
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Blood Roots (seeds of cunning)	-
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Control Plants (at will), Poison Use (+2 DC)	+1 level of existing class
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Blood Roots (vampiric thorns)	+1 level of existing class
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Blood Wine	+1 level of existing class
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Blood Roots (maximum hp), Poison Use (+3 DC)	-
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Control Plants (intelligent plants)	+1 level of existing class

has an alignment different from the blood gardener's, he must have used the 3<sup>rd</sup> level Blood Roots class feature to change its alignment to match his own before taking it on as a plant companion.

The plant companion advances as the blood gardener rises in level, as though it were the animal companion of a druid three levels lower than the blood gardener. In the case of a plant companion that may only be selected at 7<sup>th</sup> level or higher, or 10<sup>th</sup> level or higher, it advances as though it were the animal companion of a druid six levels lower or nine levels lower than the blood gardener respectively.

**Blood Wine:** The 8<sup>th</sup> level blood gardener learns how to craft a special wine, mixing together the blood of a fresh sacrifice with fruit or other plant matter from his blood garden. This is incredibly invigorating to him, giving him the strength to deal with almost any threat to his garden that his creations cannot. Blood wine takes six months to prepare, requires a Profession (brewer) check at DC 20, and costs the blood gardener 50 XP per pint brewed. Each pint requires a sacrifice as raw materials for the brewing process. Blood wine can only be drunk by the blood

gardener, and for him acts as a *potion of heroism* in every way.

### Ex-Blood Gardeners

Blood gardeners are not restricted with regard to multiclassing, but a blood gardener who changes to a non-evil alignment may no longer use any of his class features other than spells per day. Furthermore, a blood gardener who neglects his blood garden by failing to keep up the requisite sacrifices, or whose blood garden is destroyed by external threats, may no longer make use of any of his class features except the 1<sup>st</sup> level ones. He may make use of them once more by either making up the missed sacrifices or creating a new blood garden respectively.

### Mistress of the Bloody Moon

Women have long had an intuitive understanding of the mysteries of blood magic, with many feeling more drawn to its visceral, primal nature than to the bossy magic of sorcerers or bookish dweomers of wizards. These women tend to learn a little sorcery or wizardry, but find it dissatisfying and soon attempt to learn new paths to power, often including blood magic. Those

who are truly gifted when it comes to the bloody art, and truly in touch with their own natural, feminine magic, become mistresses of the bloody moon. Deliberately tying their spells to the magical energies of the moon above, they are able to draw upon enormous power when the time is right.

Though mistresses of the bloody moon are all willing to make use of sacrifice, even that of sentient beings, they do so only when truly necessary – their own magical power is generally sufficient to deal with any threat, so long as they can plan their tactics carefully and choose their place and, more importantly, time of attack. When they do perform sacrifices, they are far less likely to become addicted to sacrifice than are most blood magicians.

**Hit Die:** d4.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a mistress of the bloody moon, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any non-good.

**Feats:** Blood Sacrifice, Blood of Power.

**Skills:** Knowledge (arcane) 8 ranks, Knowledge (blood magic) 12 ranks.

**Spellcasting:** Ability to cast 4<sup>th</sup> level arcane spells.

Table 1: Moon Magic Bonuses and Penalties, by Class Level (1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>)

Moon Phase	Bloodrites, plus Necromancy and Evocation spells	Conjuration and Enchantment spells	Divination and Illusion spells	Transmutation and Abjuration spells
Dark of the Moon	+2/+4/+6	-	-2/-4/-6	-
Waxing Moon	-	+1/+2/+3	-	-1/-2/-3
Full Moon	-2/-4/-6	-	+2/+4/+6	-
Waning Moon	-	-1/-2/-3	-	+1/+2/+3

**Special:** Must be female.

### Class Skills

The mistress of the bloody moon's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (blood magic) (Int), and Spellcraft (Int). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

**Skill points at each level:** 2 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the mistress of the bloody moon prestige class.

#### Weapon and Armour Proficiency:

The mistress of the bloody moon gains no new weapon, armour or shield proficiencies. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand and Tumble.

**Spells:** For each level gained in this prestige class the mistress of the bloody moon gains an additional level of arcane spellcasting ability. To determine the number of spells the mistress of the bloody moon can cast and her caster level, add her levels in this prestige class to her levels in her

other arcane spellcasting class. For example, a 9<sup>th</sup> level sorcerer/4<sup>th</sup> level mistress of the bloody moon prepares and casts spells as a 13<sup>th</sup> level sorcerer. **Moon Magic:** The mistress of the bloody moon's magic is strongly tied to the waxing and waning of the moon. This provides both benefits and



drawbacks. During the dark of the moon, all her bloodrites that depend on caster level are cast at +2 caster level, as are any Necromancy or Evocation spells, but Divination or Illusion spells are cast at -2 caster level. Similar bonuses and penalties for other spells at various moon phases are found on Table 1.

For game purposes, the dark of the moon lasts for three days, the waxing moon eleven days, the full moon three days, and the waning moon eleven days.

At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, all the bonuses and penalties are doubled, and at 5<sup>th</sup> level, tripled.

**Improved Blood of Power:** Any time a 2<sup>nd</sup> level mistress of the bloody moon casts a bloodrite, she need only expend one-third as many hit points' worth of blood, rounded down, as are rolled

according to the bloodrite description (to a minimum of 1 hp). If she ever spills her own blood to enhance a spell, as described in the Self-Sacrifice section (see *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Blood Magic*), she likewise needs only suffer one-third as much damage as usual. However, if another blood magician uses her blood to fuel blood magic, including by sacrifice, it is three times as effective as ordinary blood. This supersedes the benefits of the Blood of Power feat.

From 4<sup>th</sup> level, the mistress of the bloody moon's blood is four times as effective, allowing her to use only one-quarter the amount usually required or gain four times the usual benefit from self-sacrifice, but still further increasing the interest other blood magicians will show in sacrificing her!

#### Sacrifice Addiction Resistance:

Mistresses of the bloody moon learn to resist the easy path to power offered by limitless human sacrifices. From 2<sup>nd</sup> level onwards, a mistress of the bloody moon adds her class level to all Will saving throws against sacrifice addiction.

From 4<sup>th</sup> level onwards, if she ever does become addicted to human sacrifice and is later cured of her addiction, the mistress of the bloody moon need no longer count any victims sacrificed before her cure to her sacrifice addiction save.

### Blood Cult Initiate

A few blood cults remain as the last vestige of the old sorcerer-ruled tribal societies that first developed blood cults. Not truly religions in any sense of the word, these blood cults revere only personal might and magical power, rather than gods or natural forces.

## The Mistress of the Bloody Moon

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells/day
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Moon Magic	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Improved Blood of Power, Sacrifice Addiction Resistance	+1 level of existing class
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Moon Magic (+4/+2/-2/-4)	+1 level of existing class
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Improved Blood of Power, Sacrifice Addiction Resistance	+1 level of existing class
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Moon Magic (+6/+3/-3/-6)	+1 level of existing class

They have no worshippers as such, merely initiates, all of who are both magicians and assassins, sent out to further the vile business of the blood cult. Blood cults devote themselves to underhand combat methods, including both concealed weapons and touch spells, so as to make surprise attacks on their victims. Most blood cult initiates are heavily indoctrinated into the cult's warped philosophy, regarding themselves as doing their sacrificial victims a favour by slaying them. As blood cult initiates become more advanced, they learn to render their victims unconscious but still just alive, so as to transport them back to the cult's headquarters for later sacrifice. This can make large-scale magic such as festivals of sacrifice far easier to achieve.

Most blood cult initiates are multiclassed sorcerer/thieves, since sorcerers started the ancient blood cults in the days before writing, let alone wizards. Some of the more progressive and modern cults allow for wizards to join, however, and bards of a particularly unpleasant nature also occasionally become blood cult initiates.

**Hit Die:** d6.

## Requirements

To qualify to become a blood cult initiate, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Any evil.

**Feats:** Blood Sacrifice, Opportunistic Sacrifice.

**Skills:** Move Silently 8 ranks, Knowledge (blood magic) 8 ranks.

**Spellcasting:** Ability to cast 2<sup>nd</sup> level arcane spells.

**Special:** Must possess the sneak attack class feature. Must find a blood cult willing to accept himself as an initiate.

## Class Skills

The blood cult initiate's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Disguise (Cha), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (blood magic) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Spot (Int), and Spellcraft (Int). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

**Skill points at each level:** 4 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

All of the following are class features of the blood cult initiate prestige class.

### Weapon and Armour Proficiency:

The blood cult initiate is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, but not with any armour or shields. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand and Tumble.

**Sneak Attack:** Any time the blood cult initiate's target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the blood cult initiate flanks the target, the blood cult initiate's attack deals extra damage. The extra damage is +1d6 at 1<sup>st</sup> level, increasing by +1d6 every alternate level. Should the blood cult initiate score a critical hit with a sneak attack, this extra damage is not multiplied. The blood cult initiate's sneak attack damage may never be applied to ranged attacks.

With an unarmed strike, the blood cult initiate can make a sneak attack that deals subdual damage instead of normal damage. The blood cult initiate cannot use a weapon that deals normal damage to deal subdual damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual -4 penalty. A blood cult initiate can only sneak attack a living creature with a discernible anatomy. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is also not vulnerable to sneak attacks. The blood cult initiate must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach a vital spot. The blood cult initiate cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment or striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach. Sneak attack bonuses gained from this class feature stack with those gained from sneak attack class features derived from other character classes. Sneak attack is an extraordinary ability.

**Improved Coup De Grace:** A blood cult initiate gains a bonus equal to his class level on the damage he inflicts during a coup de grace attack. This bonus damage is not doubled (or otherwise increased) by the critical hit caused by coup de grace. This is an extraordinary ability and reflects the blood cult initiate's special training in assassinating enemies of his cult.

**Spells:** For each alternate level gained in this prestige class, starting at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, the blood cult initiate gains an additional level of arcane spellcasting ability. To determine the number of spells the blood cult initiate can cast and his caster level, add half his levels in this prestige class to his levels in his other arcane spellcasting class. For example, a 6<sup>th</sup> level sorcerer/4<sup>th</sup> level blood cult initiate prepares and casts spells as an 8<sup>th</sup> level sorcerer.



are not skilled in magic will notice something ‘not quite right’ about a blood cult initiate using hypnotic defence.

**Concealed Weapon:** A blood cult initiate of 6<sup>th</sup> level may create a magical illusion concealing one light weapon he carries in his primary hand. The weapon is not rendered invisible, but is made to appear like an ordinary object, such as a pouch of coins, quill-pen, tankard or similarly inoffensive-seeming item. A creature observing the illusion from 10 feet away or nearer may attempt a Will saving throw to see the real weapon concealed by it, DC = 10 + blood cult initiate’s class level + blood cult initiate’s Charisma modifier.

**Innocuous:** The blood cult initiate always appears perfectly ordinary and innocuous, giving the impression of being entirely harmless. So long as he has no visible weapons and takes no obviously offensive actions, anyone wishing to attack a blood cult initiate of 4<sup>th</sup> level or higher must first succeed in a Will save against a DC of 10 + blood cult initiate’s class level + blood cult initiate’s Charisma modifier. A blood cult initiate of 8<sup>th</sup> level or higher who has no visible weapons and has taken no obviously offensive actions may also attempt to sneak attack anyone who fails a save at the same DC, so long as he either has a weapon hidden with the Concealed Weapon class feature, or is willing to use an unarmed attack. This special sneak attack is possible even

if the intended victim is aware of the blood cult initiate’s whereabouts.

**Brink of Death:** A 10<sup>th</sup> level blood cult initiate learns to take a victim to the very brink of death without killing him, so as to retain the victim’s magical energy for later use. Any time he strikes an enemy using a melee weapon, the blood cult initiate can sense precisely how many hit points the opponent has remaining. Furthermore, if the blood cult initiate ever kills an opponent in melee combat or by a coup de grace, he may elect to instead take that opponent to the brink of death. The opponent is dead for all purposes other than blood sacrifice and being raised from the dead (which is impossible, since he is not quite dead yet). He may not recover unless a *heal* spell is used on him. His life essence is retained in his heart, so that if desired the blood cult initiate may cut out his opponent’s still-beating heart and take that elsewhere to finish it off at a later date. This class feature is most commonly used to allow blood festivals to be set up that are far more powerful than usual, with a number of blood cult initiates being sent out to gather still-living hearts and bring them back to the temple for sacrifice – far more convenient than the old-fashioned method of rounding up prisoners. An average human heart weighs ten ounces. Brink of death is a supernatural ability.

**Hypnotic Defence:** A 2<sup>nd</sup> level blood cult initiate learns to put the full force of his will into effect in combat, forcing his opponent off-balance by sheer strength of personality alone. He may activate this supernatural ability or inactivate it at any time as a free action. While it is active, the blood cult initiate gains an AC bonus equal to his Charisma modifier (if positive) against one specified opponent. However, any Move Silently, Sleight of Hand, Hide, Bluff or Disguise checks he makes have a DC raised by his Charisma modifier (if positive) and he may not use his Concealed Weapon or Innocuous class features, for as long as his hypnotic defence is active. Even observers who

### The Blood Cult Initiate

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells/day
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Sneak Attack +1d6, Improved Coup De Grace	-
2	+1	+0	+3	+3	Hypnotic Defence	+1 level of existing class
3	+2	+1	+3	+3	Sneak Attack +1d6	-
4	+3	+1	+4	+4	Innocuous	+1 level of existing class
5	+3	+1	+4	+4	Sneak Attack +1d6	-
6	+4	+2	+5	+5	Concealed Weapon	+1 level of existing class
7	+5	+2	+5	+5	Sneak Attack +1d6	-
8	+6	+2	+6	+6	Innocuous (sneak attack)	+1 level of existing class
9	+6	+3	+6	+6	Sneak Attack +1d6	-
10	+7	+3	+7	+7	Brink of Death	+1 level of existing class

# Gaming Symposium

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## The Structure of Good



The story to the right never happened in any game that I know of. Yet it should technically be possible. Unfortunately, our understanding of good (much like our understand of evil) contains certain limits imposed by our approach and the relativism of modern philosophy. Good is good. It is kind, nice and fair. It likes other people, does not use them and certainly would never demand human sacrifice.

In order to more accurately understand good, we need to first define good within the fantasy d20 context. We also need to understand what behaviour actually derives from that definition. Once we understand the core of good, we can create organisations and individuals who are fundamentally good but whose behaviour does not align with what common thought holds as appropriate.

Long shadows crowded in the inn's corners, banished from their usual resting places among the tables by the harmless pyrotechnics of a magician's celebration. Bright sparks of rainbow light danced from mug to mug then flew up to the ceiling to join their kin. Roars of laughter and rivers of ale flowed from the overflowing purse of the happy adventuring band.

'Did you see the look on his face?' The burly warrior downed another pitcher of ale. 'Lajous just about had a kitten when the Temple of Kirn agreed to pay our debts. I'll carry that sour old sot's look to my grave.'

Aljious giggled as more sparks spiralled up towards the ceiling. 'I have to wonder about that. I mean, why? What did we ever do for Kirn?'

Just then, the inn fell silent. Its denizens bowed their collective heads before a figure clad in a robe of white silk, stiff with golden embroidery. Even the adventurers paused for a moment in their revelry.

'Ah, my good friends!' The high priest of Kirn's voice danced along their ale soaked nerves. 'I am so glad to see you happy. And well.' He levelled a thoughtful gaze at the tavern wenches sitting on their laps. 'And about to engage in holy worship I see.'

Aljious blushed, snatching sparks out of his companion's bosom. 'Er...'

'My good, good friends,' continued the priest. 'Indeed it warms my heart. But I fear that I must ask you to turn away from this gleeful place. There is a dark force stirring...'

'Bah!' shouted the warrior. 'Why should we bother with that? It didn't turn out so well last time!'

The high priest smiled. 'Of course. I understand.' He turned, taking three steps towards the door. 'I suppose that I will have to tell Lajous that we will not be able to take your debt after all.'

The party scrambled for their gear.

## The Structure of the Previous Argument

In 'The Structure of Evil' we discussed how we might approach the concept of evil as a fundamental, universal concept. This differs from both ethical and psychological evil, both of which are relative to the individuals performing the action. This fundamental evil, defined as a cosmological accumulation of power without regard for the consequences, feeds off the actions that people take in the name of whatever causes they espouse. This fundamental evil uses so-called 'negative energy' to gather energy to itself and does not have the power of creation.

In a similar vein we should examine the concept that we call 'good'. How does fundamental good differ from the ethical/psychological structures we assume as modern thinkers? What does the presence of this fundamental good mean for characters in fantasy worlds? Does approaching fundamental good as a unique construct give us any leverage for creating more involving worlds and stories?

## What Is Good?

The first question we need to resolve revolves around the nature of good. What do we mean when we say the word good? What is its place in the cosmology, society and epistemology of our game worlds? By clarifying the definition of good we can be sure that all of our discussions address the same topic. At the same time, defining good allows us to identify and step beyond the usual barriers that occur when we discuss this issue.

*Core Rulebook I* describes ethical good. Characters behave in a good fashion when they 'protect innocent life'. The definition of innocent life is not given; presumably the authors mean that innocent life has not yet either opposed the needs of good or is at the very least not evil. In either event, an ethically good character can be defined by the act of protecting others. His motivations for doing so

have no bearing on the relative good of the action. In effect 'protecting others' is in fact the 'code of good' mentioned in *The Structure of Evil*. Violation of this code creates the ethical evil outlined in the *Core Rulebooks*.

The same book goes on to discuss the psychological aspects of good. Good characters express 'a concern for the dignity of sentient beings'. They feel 'altruism' and 'a respect for life'. In these cases the character's motivations come into question. When a character acts out of any or all of these three emotions he performs good acts. When the character acts out of some other emotion (say, hate or greed) his actions cannot be called good no matter what their eventual outcome.

Although these two kinds of evil please modern thinkers, the structure of D20 rules implies a third kind of good. This good exists neither as a code of ethics nor as a set of psychological states although it may create such things for its own ends. This good is a substance of the universe, just as real and as potent as arcane magic or divine power. In fact, it may well be divine power, or it may be a force even more primal than the gods themselves. Deliberately aligning with this good brings with it benefits and penalties, risks and rewards.

It is this third kind of fantasy good which we as players need to understand. By treating good as a fundamental aspect of the universe, rather than as a personal construct, we can get a much clearer picture of its role in our fantasy societies and characters. In order to clarify our discussion we will refer to this kind of fantasy good as 'fundamental good'.

## Fundamental Good

As with our original discussion of fundamental evil, we must pause here for a moment to define the aspects and measure of fundamental good. We need to understand what fundamental good is, what it does, and how it affects the entities and cultures that align themselves with

it. We also need to address the rather frightening question: is fundamental good embodied in the gods, or is it a separate entity.

Our core references do not directly address any of these topics. They imply various aspects of good based on its contrast with chaos, evil and law. Therefore we must deduce the nature of fundamental good from its known aspects. An examination of the available literature (*Core Rulebooks I, II, and III*, v3.5) reveals the following: it demands actions from those who accept it, it has the power to create, it has substance in the form of positive energy, and it has strength in and of itself outside of the actors who align themselves with it.

Like evil, good demands specific actions from those who align themselves with it. These actions include, but are not limited to, protecting 'innocent' life, creating works of art, performing acts of charity, assisting those in need and defending the right. The purpose behind these actions may or may not be entirely clear to the actors, but the general positive effect should be immediately apparent. We may also note here that the actions required by good may involve personal or situational sacrifice on the part of the actors. Charity and the protection of the innocent either may place the actor in harm's way or reduce his personal resources/power.

Similarly good wields the power of creation. The power most obviously manifests in the ability of good clerics to spontaneously cast healing spells. However, it can also be seen in the selection of abilities for good creatures in *Core Rulebook III*: many good outsiders have some kind of healing ability along with spell-like abilities that involve conjuration or creation. A very few have spell sets similar to those of the evil outsiders with their focus on personal domination and power.

Good creatures' access to, and use of, positive energy (and the occasionally interchangeable 'holy power') is either another manifestation of, or the source

of, their creative power. Positive energy comes from the positive energy plane, the crucible of creation. It is raw, primal creation waiting to happen. Positive energy is akin to chaos, shaping and reshaping itself into a myriad of forms.

Positive energy shares a direct relationship to 'holy' energy but is not the same. If the two were identical then spells like *death ward* and *disrupt undead* would have the 'good' descriptor. They do not. This points to a relationship between positive energy and 'holy power' similar to that of negative energy and 'unholy power'. Holy power may well be harvested and contained positive energy, tamed creation directed towards a specific end. This holy power may create and can fuel spells/effects in its own right.

A review of these points leads us to a possible taxonomy of fundamental good. Fundamental good has generative power and can channel that power into a wide variety of specific effects. It does not need to gather power from other creatures. Instead, it seeks to spread out the power of creation creating a situation where more and more power is available for harvest and use.

This taxonomy points towards a possible explanation for the behaviour required by fundamental good. If we assume that fundamental good attempts to spread out the ability to create power it therefore follows that it will make every effort to increase the number of power generators. Defending others, spreading wealth to those who need it and similar acts all create an environment where many generators prosper.

Fundamental good, then, could be interpreted as the generative principle. It seeks to expand creation, both by increasing the overall power of creation and by increasing the overall number of creators. This generative principle is not unbridled creation (that would be chaos) but rather the constant and careful focusing of effort on making more.

The approach taken by fundamental good brings it into direct conflict with fundamental evil. Being non-generative, evil seeks to concentrate power into individual actors in order to more easily harvest it. Good takes a radically different approach, spreading power out and allowing the multiplicative effect to generate

### A Note About Innocence

If we assume that good is a generative principle, we cannot assume that innocence has anything to do with an individual's sexual behaviour. Norms surrounding all behaviour tend to be more related to the chaos/law axis than the good/evil axis.

a large amount of power over time. Good's actors become targets for evil's concentration efforts, while the concentration effort of evil directly contradicts good's fundamental strategy.

### The strategy of good

Having defined 'good' as a generative principle we can now turn our attention to an examination of the actions it demands from its followers. In particular we can now address why good is so attractive to intelligent creatures, why it works so well as a way of organising societies, and why its followers may sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others.

### The Attraction of Good

What attraction does good hold for the average character? Although the idea of following a generative principle sounds useful in theory, it could also create some serious problems. In particular, the requirement to engage in self-destructive behaviour (like defending the weak) and in efforts that will not bear fruit for decades seem contradictory to the principle of self-interest. How can any intelligent creature choose not to seek advantage for itself?

Armchair (and professional) philosophers turn to psychological motivations to explain the existence

of good behaviour in the real world. They claim that it 'feels good' to perform acts of altruism. They go on to explain that 'socially positive behaviour' in fact enhances each individual's chance of survival thereby making it in each actor's self interest.

In a fantasy world, with fundamental good, we can find other sources for the attraction of good. Simply put, good exhibits remarkable power. In the service of good people develop abilities that greatly improve their quality of life. They can create water, heal wounds, soothe diseases, repair objects and bless crops. These relatively non-combat-related powers may not be of great interest to skirmishing parties, but they ease the lives of anyone who tries to earn a living.

Unlike the servants of evil, those who serve fundamental good find themselves encouraged to use their powers in a proliferate manner. This difference comes from the radically different fundamental strategies exhibited by the two forces. While evil tries to focus power, good seeks to encourage as many people as possible to generate power. Good accomplishes this goal by investing continually in individuals, families and communities with the hope that, over time, they will participate in the universal cycle of creation.

This largesse extends to the sharing of physical as well as magical resources. Fundamental good and its servants have direct access to the power of creation. They can make any physical resource they need and can easily take care of their physical needs. It is from this situation of personal comfort that they give to others. Money, time, labour and material items can flow outward.

This constant investment by the forces of good creates a situation where common individuals find themselves in debt to supernatural forces. These forces rarely call in their debts, getting enough payback from the overall increase in creation. However, in times of danger these debts may be

referred to as ‘excellent’ reasons for individuals to engage in heroic acts. Those who renege on their debts place the entire community at risk of having the support of good withdrawn; if the area is sufficiently reliant on good’s power this could spell disaster for entire regions.

## Power Concentration and the Addiction to Good

Why would fundamental good, which pursues a grand strategy involving increasing creation in entire societies, want to provide individuals with remarkable powers? Furthermore why would good want to create barriers to access its power? If it uses the free distribution of power to create debts that it then calls in to motivate behaviour, barriers seem counter to its primary purpose.

We can easily explain good’s inclination to focus power into individuals if we assume that fundamental good cannot take action on its own. Rather, it must act through intermediaries and other intelligent creatures that serve it. The more an individual’s actions support fundamental good, the more power good will invest in the creature. This in turn increases the scope of the creature’s ability to support good. In other words, the more often a creature promotes good’s interests the more power it can invest. This investment pays off over time as the actor disperses the power, which in turn allows good to invest even more power in the actor. Over time this creates celestials and other such creatures, beings formed of holy power.

The explanation for why good creates barriers (i.e. quests or oath requirements) for access to holy power is somewhat more problematic. We can take two possible approaches; either:

- 1) Despite its great power, good cannot directly act in the world. Its intermediaries (being bound by time) need some way to sort through all of the requests that come

before them. These barriers are simply ways to slow down and sift though the needs presented, assuring good that its servants focus their efforts on things that truly need doing.

- 2) Good recognises the fine line between providing assistance and creating addiction. An addict does not create anything; instead he continually draws on whatever he craves to further satisfy his needs. This goes against the basic strategy of good. Barriers to the acquisition of holy power provide resistance to addiction so long as it is more difficult to perform the action through holy power than it would be to use mundane means.

Both structures provide the Games Master with a wide variety of interesting speculations. To illuminate just one: if good must act through intermediaries who have limited time, could evil simply overwhelm the forces of good by ‘plaguing’ them with minor issues until they could no longer deal with the greater threat? This basic premise is implied in many fantasy books, but never fully explored.

## Using the elements of good in a game

Now that we have a concept of fundamental good, how do we use it in our games? What happens when we assume that good exists in and of itself, rather than as a psychological or societal concept?

### Personal Good

Personal good comes in a wide variety of forms and flavours. However, when fundamental good enters into a character’s story it generally takes on one of the following established forms:

- 1) *Assistant* – This kind of encounter with good involves the character looking for and receiving aid. This aid may be material or magical; it could be requested or unasked for. When fundamental good plays an assisting role, it is helping the character to do something he has already decided to do. This action may be in line with good’s objectives (i.e. defending a prosperous village) or the assistance may be a way to help bind the character to good’s long-term goals by making him personally indebted.
- 2) *Lender* – good’s immense resources make it an excellent lender of magical, mystical and mundane support. In this case the character knows that he needs assistance and draws from good’s resources. The understanding is that the character will pay back what he borrows. The lender now wields leverage over the character and may ‘request’ assistance, further payments, or even sacrifice on the part of the character as repayment.
- 3) *Quest Target* – truly epic needs require correspondingly epic sacrifices on the part of the character. In this case gaining access to sufficient holy power to solve the character’s issue requires preliminary activity on his part. The conditions of this quest could be simple (i.e. go to the next town and build a temple) or complex (i.e. defeat the nine minions of the Dark Lord before you can face him in battle). In either case the power granted by good will correspond with the level of difficulty encountered during the quest.



The primary distinction between the three forms lies in the level of activity required by the character in seeking out good's involvement. In an assistant role good intervenes without any stated intention for the aid to be reciprocated at a later date and without any prior action on the character's part. When acting as a lender good requires the character to make an explicit promise to repay the debt, or it may have some other means of enforcing that repayment (such as the example story at the beginning of this article). As a quest target good plays a generally passive role, rewarding the character for his actions only when he takes them. This third role represents the most common role good plays in fantasy novels.

### Societal Good

Good societies (i.e. countries, nation-states or empires) represent one of the greatest aspirations of all good actors. These societies work tirelessly to support the common and the individual good, provide resources to all who need them, and slowly wax ever stronger.

Unfortunately such societal good rarely works when opposed. Fundamental good requires a careful balance of the needs of the many with the needs of the individuals who make up that many. As resources accumulate more and more opportunities arise for this balance to fall out of joint, until finally fundamental evil gains ascendancy.

Good generally functions best at a local level. It may take the form of a local shrine, a kindly sheriff, or a well thought out set of laws that govern the common well. At this level the social institution is easily understandable, accessible and able to react to changes in the environment. These local institutions generally do not have the ability to affect things in a grand scope; instead they rely on the general well being of the people around them to have a positive effect in the world.

Massive temples and similar organisations seem to be perfect for dealing with the grand powers wielded

by their evil counterparts. However, the easily corruptible nature of such organisations actually makes them less effective against evil than other, more isolated actors for good. This leads to the 'hermit in the hills' phenomenon, where characters must quest for and eventually find the isolated good actor who can provide them with the epic assistance they need.

### Racial Good

What exactly do we mean when we call a race 'good'? Does the race somehow possess a biological propensity for fundamental good? Or is it part of some kind of larger spiritual conspiracy that alters its behaviour in predictable ways?

There are several ways that we can address the concept of good races, depending on how addicted we want the race to be to holy power. Examples include:

- 1) A race that has a long-term debtor relationship with some force of fundamental good. This race works steadily to pay off its debt to fundamental good, but also accrues additional debts as it calls on good's power. This creates a feedback loop that could last for generations.
- 2) A race that has associated with fundamental good for so long that it no longer has procreative abilities. Instead the race springs (either newborn or fully formed) from some font of holy power. If this race wishes to continue it must serve good.
- 3) A race that has established an assistant relationship with another race or culture. They act as the other race's guardians and helpers, in return for considerations from the forces of fundamental good.

All of this begs the question: is fundamental good intelligent in and of itself? Does it exist as a power

source or an actively motive force? Are the gods independent entities, manifestations of the greater good, or delusions born of mortal minds?

### Conclusion

The discussion contained in this article and its companion piece barely scratch the surface of the complex issues raised asserting fundamental morality. In fact, the permutations of these ideas could easily lead one down a wide variety of paths, including ones that would be unpalatable.

Fundamental good represents a unique power in any fantasy world. In order to accommodate it, and not allow it to completely unbalance the game, we have to carefully consider its role. We must also ask what would happen if good were completely unchecked? It may well be that fundamental good cannot exist without some kind of balancing force, otherwise there would be no destruction or decay at all. Such an environment would quickly become infinitely cluttered, choke out, and die.

These concepts also open an interesting avenue of exploration. Would it be possible to design a truly mythic game, one in which a character's alignment to fundamental principles meant more than his personal attitudes or experiences? Could we further open such a game up by performing a similar analysis of chaos and law? Would there be neutral powers (like positive and negative energy) in such a world?

Even if we do not wish to design a game wholly along such lines the analysis provides us with some unique ideas for our current d20 fantasy worlds. Good does not have to be constantly helpful and protective. Indeed, it can be as addictive as any drug and as destructive as the most evil of villains in the right situations.



**More from Shannon and Gaming Symposium next month!**

# Get it Right, Punk!

## Starting Perp Campaigns As You Mean Them to Go On

Matthew Pritchard

Ever Games Mastered a perp campaign that just never seemed to get off the ground? Or were all your players slammed in an iso-cube before they even got to 2<sup>nd</sup> level? Your Umpty Baggers' syndicate gets wiped out minutes after making their first sale? Well, don't worry, help is at hand! Just read through this article and you'll soon have your perps rubbing shoulders with the Big Meg's toughest crime lords!

### What is So Difficult About Perp Campaigns Anyway?

Well, for starters perp campaigns are a little trickier to organise – after all, how often do you really get to play the bad guys in a roleplay game? Most games are based around the unwritten assumption that players will normally 'do the right thing', (protecting the weak, foiling the evil plot, etc.) Nowhere is this better exemplified than in Judge campaigns – players are bound by strict codes of conduct and even the slightest deviation from this will see them whisked away for a twenty year stretch on Titan. A quick call from Sector Control is enough to provide a convenient and plausible entry into any adventure, sending the judges zooming across the city to protect the weak and innocent, (well, maybe not the latter given the average inhabitant of Mega-City One!)

However, in perp campaigns the situation is totally different. What

would have happened in *The Lord of the Rings* if, instead of taking on the trek across Middle Earth, Frodo had simply muttered 'Sod this Mordor lark, I'm going to burgle Sam Gamgee's place instead?' This freedom of action makes perp campaigns far more open than other types of games, which can cause problems for both players and Games Master alike. What can you do if your perps are hell bent on breaking into the local kneepad store, thereby totally ignoring the scenario you have carefully prepared? Or, at the opposite extreme, they are completely devoid of ideas? These situations can result in the Games Master having to improvise entire of sessions of play or the players feeling they have been 'shoehorned' into various situations.

Another problem is that perps have extremely low hit points when they start out and there is an awful lot of very dangerous weaponry around on the mean streets of the Big Meg. Even 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> level characters are still at risk of being instantly killed by a well-placed shot from a humble spit pistol, to say nothing of



more powerful weapons and special attacks like rapid fire. This can make for a depressingly high turnover of characters at the beginning of campaigns if the Games Master does not get the balance right.

Finally, perps are nearly always secondary characters in the *Judge Dredd* comic strip. With the exception of a few mega-villains such as the Angels or the Dark Judges, very little information is given about how they conduct their day to day

business. They really only come to our attention when 'Old Stony Face' is about to bust them and end their lives of crime. Therefore players can find themselves a little short of inspiration when it comes to playing perps, as compared with judge characters.

So, how do you balance all these difficulties, allowing your perps total freedom of action to pursue their criminal designs, but without having to either ad-lib all the time or seeing them arrested/slaughtered seconds after the campaign starts. Well, the first step is to do a little prep work...

## Addressing The Problems – Preparation

First up, each of your players' perps will need a detailed background. The players can do this alone, but preferably the backgrounds should be worked out in conjunction with the Games Master. Try to address questions such as why the perp has turned to a life of crime - in the case of players with the Dunk or Goon prior life this will be fairly obvious, but Batters and Inventors require a little more thought. Habitual criminals might well have already had a few run-ins with the Law – has the perp already served time in the cubes? If so, why and how long? How did he get caught? Was he just unlucky or was he betrayed by a life-long friend?

Thinking along these lines will bring you logically to the next step, the character's known associates and enemies. Any perp worth his salt

is likely to have risen up through the ranks of various juve or puggly gangs and membership of these inevitably creates both bitter rivalries and fierce friendships. Were two or more of the players members of the same gang? Or did they have the same truant officer? Finding logical links between the perps will help explain why they are working together, giving the campaign a ring of authenticity right from the start. And what about family members?



Are the character's parents still alive? If so, do they know/approve of their child's criminal activities? With a little imagination, a perp's family can become an integral part of the campaign, with rival mob bosses kidnapping players' mothers, holding sisters to ransom and creating bitter vendettas as brothers are gunned down in cold blood. Or what about a scenario based around a guilt-ridden parent going to the judges with details of their child's criminal activities?

Think about the perp's prior life too. If they have chosen the goon prior life, for whom have they worked in the past? Does the Citi-Def soldier still serve on the force or have his criminal activities caused his

expulsion? How successful did the jetball player become and why has he given it up? Thinking along these lines will create a list of Non-Player Characters and local knowledge the perp would logically be aware of: e.g. the goon would know the rough power structure of the local mob bosses, as well as being on speaking terms with a few of the minor lieutenants; the gambler would certainly have detailed information on the sector's loan sharks and know the

best shuggy halls and card players, etc.

Having mapped out the perp's past, it should be fairly obvious as to which types of crime they will probably turn their hands at the beginning of the campaign. For example, perp groups with a high proportion of 'muscle' might go in for tappings or maybe a little intimidation and debt collection, whilst more technically minded groups

will probably tend towards less physical crimes such as robbing low security shops, blackmail, and the like. Bearing this in mind will help Games Masters when they come to sketch out the first few steps of the campaign. Give the players a few situations where their special skills and feats can be employed and you'll have their attention straight away.

Now the perps will need somewhere to begin their lives of crime. However, at the beginning of any campaign players will be little fish in an extremely large and dangerous pond. With this in mind, it is always best to start out small and allow the action to build as the characters grow

in wealth, experience, etc. At first a Games Master need only sketch out a smallish area based around a few levels of a single block, with a few specific buildings done in more detail. A seedy, run-down bar or Shuggy Hall where players can drink, gossip, gamble and plan their crimes is probably a good idea. A few sample shops for players to rob, charge protection from, are other possibilities too.

At some point the players will also need a base, somewhere they can hide their loot, tinker with vehicles and generally hide out. Given the extreme housing shortages in Mega-City One this is unlikely to belong to one of the players, but the multiple disasters that have befallen the city in the last two decades mean vast areas are either derelict or completely destroyed. More than one criminal gang has started out in a ruined building or subterranean chamber. Allowing players a base also provides them with a focal point for their activities. Often, the players will begin to pay more and more attention to this as the campaign progresses and they install defence mechanisms, med-bays, weapon testing grounds and inside toilets, to name but a few.

With the stage thus set, the place needs to be populated with a few suitably seedy denizens to help get the players off to a flying start: an elderly fence to whom players can sell stolen goods; the greasy, fat owner of the bar/shuggy hall who is a mine of information about criminal activity; a goon who can give the PCs their first jobs and eventually provide players with a contact in a mobsters group. Use your imagination – these characters do not necessarily have to be written out in great detail. Just give each one a few interesting characteristics to make sure players remember them. Think about the larger picture too. Who are the local crime lords or mobsters? What rackets are they involved in? What about the puggly and juve gangs that lurk in every block park or shopperama? These can be especially

useful as possible adversaries for low-level perps. Or maybe the perps can hire a few of them to keep watch on a building?

The final step is to mix in a few rumours to really bring the environment to life. Mega City perps are chronic gossips and wherever two or more sit down to sup a Munska, the local underworld is going to be discussed. As Games Master simply decide on a few minor storylines, things like rivalries between local gangs, details of a big umpty shipment due to come in or rumours of a nark working somewhere within the sector. These can be fed to the players through the Non-Player Characters you have already sketched. Should players show an interest in them at any point they can then be worked up into scenarios and, if not, they will add immeasurable colour to your campaign, creating an atmosphere of a seething hotbed of crime taking place all the time!

## Getting It Up and Running

Having carefully sketched out some locations for your campaign setting, filled it with appropriate Non-Player Characters and spread some juicy rumours around, it is time to let your perps loose in it! As suggested in the *Judge Dredd Rulebook*, it's always best to start your perps off small – that way their chances of being gunned down or dragged off to the cubes are minimal. But small does not necessarily have to mean boring. Rather than just give your perps one simple task to perform, try mixing a couple of plotlines together.

A classic opening for a perp campaign is the 'I'm in the market for...' variety of scenario, whereby the players learn of a buyer interested in getting hold of something in particular, whether it be power packs for laser rifles or batteries for 10,000 pairs of defective hoverpants. This gives them an objective, but without telling them how to achieve it. They

must now fall back on their network of contacts, asking if and where the items can be obtained. Perhaps now they meet someone who can help them...but at a price. He wants the players to help him out by threatening a young bite fighter who owes him money. On going to the bite fighter's home they discover that his brother is a dedicated peeper, spending hours watching and recording the daily routines of everyone in the opposite block. Very interesting stuff for prospective burglars! The brother offers to give players the information if they let his brother off the debt...etc, etc.

By interweaving three very simple plotlines, the whole becomes far more interesting, with the perps having to weigh up their options. Do they simply smash the bite fighter's home to pieces and steal everything they can find in lieu of the debt? Or do they take the long-term view and pay the debt, thereby keeping both sides happy? Introducing this sort of 'you scratch my back...' type of play will also inject a shot of gritty realism into your campaign.

Another good opening is the 'Lucky Find waiting to be Exploited...' style of plotline. Players stumble across someone or something with an unusual talent...a talent that can make the perps a lot of creds, provided they use it correctly. Be it only a battered old wrestling droid of a near unstoppable pre-Apocalypse War model or simply a nerdy-looking kid with a Labrador-sized rat, this can lead PCs into all sorts of interesting ventures, organising illegal sporting events or gambling syndicates as they seek to rake the creds in. Remember, the Mega City underworld isn't all umpty bagging and organ legging. Use your imaginations. With the campaign up and running in this way it is crucial to encourage your players to be creative. As perps in Mega-City One they should constantly be on the lookout for opportunities to earn, steal, cheat or bully some creds.

Also, as Games Master you should seize any opportunity to draw new Non-Player Characters into the campaign. For example, if one of the players wants to buy a las-rifle for his perp, don't just turn to the equipment section of the rulebook, look up the price and tell them to cross the creds off their character sheet. Instead, get them to use their contacts to set up a meeting with a corrupt Citi-Def officer. Then ask yourself, why does the Citi-Def officer want to risk his position selling equipment? Is it just simple greed or does he have something to hide? Perhaps your perps will have to do a little persuading, gathering evidence of his adifax habit and then using it to blackmail him?

Another variant on this theme is to allow players to discover the Non-Player Character's dark secret first. Perhaps the players spot a minor ranking scientist lurking around a darkened street waiting to score his fix of sugar? The players will then be free to exploit the situation as they see fit, allowing them access to the plans for experimental technology they can subsequently use to commit crimes.

By using a little imagination you will soon build up a whole supporting cast of seedy underworld denizens, thereby making the campaign that much more realistic. By tying Non-Player Characters to particular specialities, (for example a seedy backstreet doctor who works patching up bullet wounds or an eccentric tek boffin who is a wizard with vehicles), players will start to think of this support cast as real people. When faced with a dilemma, players will begin discussing which of their Non-Player Character contacts is best suited to helping them.

## Improvisation - Make Your Perps Do The Work!

Eventually, however, your players' perps will become sufficiently powerful that they will start wanting

to plan their own crimes. This can be a little tricky, as very often they will be forced to improvise situations, Non-Player Characters, bank vaults, the sort of thing that can be daunting for even experienced Games Masters. So what should you do when players suddenly decide they want to try to whack a rival mobster or rob one of Megwest's biggest banks?

Firstly, don't panic! Get your players to spell out exactly what it is they want to do – do not let them get away with a vague 'we want rob a bank or something'. Given the incredibly high crime rates in Mega-City One, anyone with anything of value will have invested in a proportionately high level of security measures, to say nothing of the ever-vigilant judges. Players should not expect to just blunder in, guns blazing and survive. Of course, it is important that your players know their limits beforehand – there is no point in a group of 1<sup>st</sup> level perps trying to rob a Sector House bike pool, for example, no matter how carefully the operation is planned out.

Instead, Games Masters should encourage players to carefully plan every detail of their operation. This can often involve whole days of game time as perps stake out buildings, seek informants within the company, bribe or blackmail officials or even arrange for diversions to keep the judges busy. A Games Master can easily fill an entire gaming session with the preparation for a robbery by constantly posing questions and problems for the players. Have they a buyer lined up for the goods once they are stolen? Where will the booty be stored after the robbery? And what about a back-up plan for if it all goes wrong? Do they have safe houses where they can lie low or will they meet up at a pre-arranged location out in the Cursed Earth?

Using this strategy not only gives Games Masters time to organise their thoughts, it can also provide them with more ideas. Very often planning the perfect crime, (escape

routes, hiding places for the booty, etc.), can consume an entire evening's play. Playing out this stage of the game also allows perps with less combat orientated skills and feats, (e.g. Computer Use, Disguise, etc.), to come into their own. With a little encouragement your perps will start concocting hare-brained schemes to get a look at the inside of bank-vaults or learn the exact table where the mobster will be eating. These can often provide some of the most memorable moments of the campaign.

There are other, more practical ways that Games Masters unhappy with this 'flying by the seat of your pants' style of play can avoid it. One simple strategy is to get your perps to spend the last 5-10 minutes of every session outlining what their objectives will be for the next. The Games Master can then use the interim period to plan out the necessary details. And remember, if you do ever find yourself absolutely stumped, perp campaigns have the perfect *Deus Ex Machina* – the Justice Department. It's amazing how quickly players will forget about their robbery plans when a couple of Manta Prowl Tanks suddenly turn up in the area!

## Handling the Judges in Perp Campaigns

This is perhaps the trickiest part of all to get right in perp campaigns. Right from the very word go your players are up against the toughest, best equipped law enforcement agents the 22<sup>nd</sup> century can produce. In terms of sheer firepower a single judge can easily take out a whole group of higher level perps...and that's before he has even begun calling in back up. Perps are especially vulnerable at lower levels, as their low hit points and lack of armour make any run-in with judges likely to end up in a one way ticket to the nearest Resyk.

And yet Mega-City One is just not the same without them. Leave them out and your players will soon

become blasé, wantonly spraying bullets around in crowded shopping malls knowing that they are safe from judicial interference due to their low levels.

So, what is the answer? It depends on the style of your campaign. If your players are happy with a fairly high-turnover rate amongst their characters, by all means throw the judges at them whenever it seems plausible. But this can make for very stilted, boring campaign play. A far better solution is to sketch out 3 or 4 judge encounter ideas you can throw at players whenever the opportunity arises. These encounters don't even have to involve actual judges. Perhaps a high DC Listen check reveals to the perps that the distant wail of the judge's siren is rapidly drawing nearer. Do they risk it and finish loading the booty or do they cut their losses and run while they can? Or maybe a midnight gambling session is interrupted by the unmistakable silhouette of a judge outside, trying to peer in through the window. Players have to make a succession of Hide checks in order to avoid detection.

By introducing a few of these 'set-piece' encounters, Games Masters can remind players of the existence of the judges, even at lower levels, without the risk of having everyone in the campaign slammed into an iso-cube. It's amazing how much extra planning players will put into a robbery or assassination attempt if they are unsure of whether the judges will become involved or not.

Another tricky aspect of perp campaigns is the violence. This is really a matter of taste. If you and your players like that style of play, then so much the better. But certain Mega City crimes are so repulsive they can be difficult to realistically roleplay. It's one thing to menace the

owner of a local diner or shoot down a rival gang leader, but organising and filming a vi-slug for example is a bit too much. As players essentially have



*carte blanche* do whatever they want, many perp campaigns can become swamped in senseless beatings, torture and worse. Many of which have appeared in the original comic strip, of course...but without a little care on the part of Games Masters their perps can degenerate into little more than mindless psychopaths, accustomed to simply shooting and stabbing their way to whatever they want rather than using their cunning.

One way of preventing this from occurring is through use of the judges. Although Mega City One

is swamped daily by a tidal wave of violent crime the truth is that certain crimes do *not* go unnoticed. A sudden welter of torture and random shootings within a fairly localised area is sure to bring the heat down on players. Should these crimes have been committed in an arbitrary nature then players are likely to have left evidence that TEK teams are going to find. Also, rival gangs, mobsters and other underworld denizens are not going to be happy about the increase in the Justice Department presence caused by the players' actions and might well decide to take matters into their own hands. Give your players subtle hints about this situation, with them being approached by nasty-looking thugs and receiving menacing vid-phone messages. However, Games Masters who wish to allow their perps to conduct really violent crimes should always bear in mind the vein of dark humour possessed by the Judge Dredd comic strip.

Following the advice laid out in this article should help you to get your perps' crime empires up and running without too much trouble, keeping the pace of the roleplay fast, exciting and true to the spirit of the original comic strip. So what are you waiting for? There's a whole city out there packed full of easy creds...get after them!



# Ultimate Gameplay

## Derro

Robert J Schwalb

Of the modern fantasy staples, the Underdark is both the coolest and the most clichéd. It is a place of endless caverns of alien beauty populated by depraved drow, horrid squid creatures and sprawling cities of fish people. Grey dwarves carve out kingdoms, while xenophobic deep gnomes struggle to survive against the tide of warmongering forces of true evil. Among the myriad of creatures and civilisations dwelling in the bottomless depths of the Underdark live the derro, a forgotten race of half-breed dwarves, created by some ancient slaving race, for some long forgotten purpose. These twisted, spiteful creatures live for malevolence, competing against the drow, duergar and the other denizens for resources such as slaves, magic and coin.

Playing a Derro requires work from the player as their obsession with wicked cruelty estranges them from all but the most depraved allies. Even in the most evil parties of adventurers, derro are quick to betray their comrades, condemning them to horrific and painful ends, all for a few pieces of gold or a magical bauble. If a shred of loyalty exists within their traitorous hearts, they grant it only to their own kind. Instead, derro are ideal opponents, enemies of all that is good and just. They are perfect foils for player characters if you employ a little forethought and planning. This article offers options for derro nemeses by presenting new feats and the master savant prestige class

to send a thrill of horror through the most resolute of players.

### Feats

What follows are just a few new feats, designed to accent and expand the powers of the derro race. Each feat enhances the features of the race and proves useful to derro of any class. Of course, all of these are restricted to derro characters.

### Psychotic (Derro)

Though you are a gibbering lunatic, you command fearsome control over arcane energies.

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence 15+, character level 9th, madness.

**Benefits:** Instead of the normal modifiers to your Wisdom and Charisma score, you gain a +8 bonus to your Charisma score and a -8 penalty to your Wisdom score. In addition, you gain an additional +1 insight bonus to your Will saves. Finally, in addition to the standard spell immunities conferred by madness, you are immune to *crushing despair*, *good hope* and all *symbol* spells.

**Normal:** Derro use their Charisma modifier on Will saves instead of their



Wisdom modifier, and have immunity to *confusion* and *insanity* effects. A derro cannot be restored to sanity by any means short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell. The racial madness of the derro provides a +6 bonus to their Charisma scores and a -6 penalty to their

Wisdom scores. A derro restored to sanity gains 6 points of Wisdom and loses 6 points of Charisma.

**Special:** If the penalty to your Wisdom reduces your score below 1, you may not take this feat.

### Shape Spell-like Ability (Derro)

You are able to change the area of affect of your spell-like abilities.

**Prerequisites:** Character level 6th, Charisma 17+.

**Benefits:** By increasing the casting time of your spell-like abilities from a standard attack action to a full-round action, you can change the area the spell effect. Count the total number of squares normally included in the spell's area; this is the new limit of the spell-ability's area of effect. You may shape the spell effect in whatever fashion you desire, but each affected square in the shaped area must touch another square in the newly shaped area. Thus, you could reform a spread to fall into a line, or

**Benefit:** Choose two spells that normally deal no damage, such as *silent image* or *fog cloud*. You cast these spells at a +1 caster level.

**Special:** You may select this feat multiple times, with each instance of taking this feat allowing you to select two different spells.

### Sunlight Adaptation (Derro)

You can better resist the awfulness of the sun's burning rays than your brethren.

**Benefit:** You ignore the effects of exposure to the sun for a number of days equal to your Constitution modifier. When that time has passed, the sun deals 1 point of Constitution for every two hours you are exposed to sunlight. For example, if a derro has a 13 Constitution, he may resist the effects of exposure to the sun for 1 day before losing Constitution. After this time, the sun deals 1 point of Constitution every two hours the derro remains in sunlight.

**Normal:** A derro takes 1 point of Constitution damage for every hour

### Toxic Flesh (Derro)

Your exposure to venoms and the weird magical auras of the Underdark mutated your flesh to secrete small amounts of venom.

**Benefit:** Your hands secrete poison equivalent to Medium monstrous spider venom (see *Core Rulebook II* for details on poison). You are immune to its effects. As a free action, for a number of times per day equal to your Charisma modifier, you may coat a piercing or slashing weapon in your primary hand with venom of the aforementioned strength.

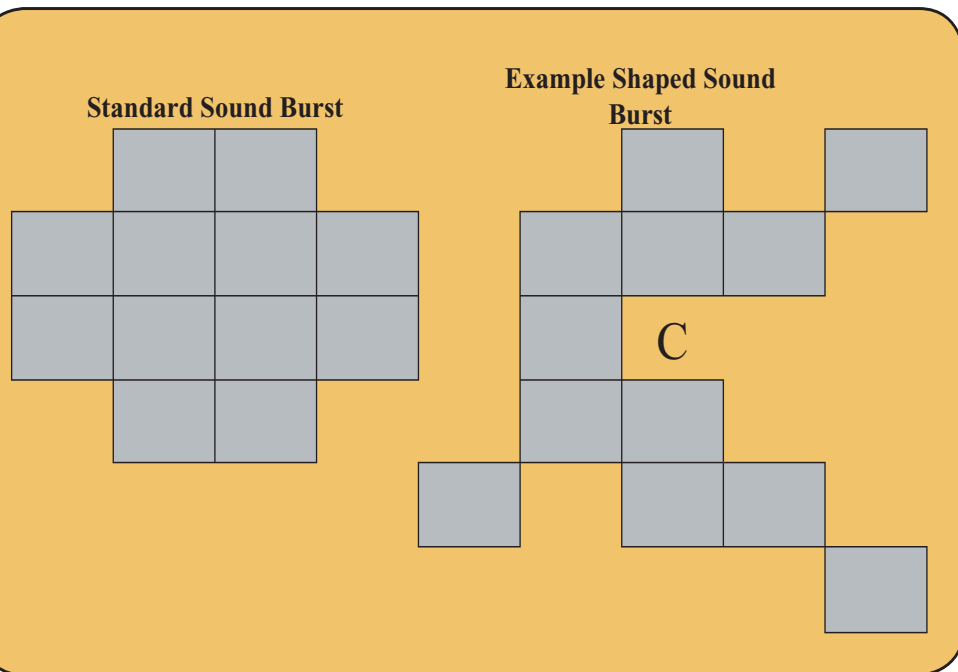
### New Prestige Class

In a society built upon chaos, discord and wickedness, it is hard to imagine anything with authority strong enough to reign in the base impulses of the derro. Nevertheless, a class of derro dominates all of the others, through fear, intelligence and sheer depravity. These masters, called the savants, exert a loose

control over the capricious derro, prodding when necessary, and making fantastic examples of random derro, slaughtering them in unbelievable and spectacular manners. All derro fear the savants, and with good cause.

Savants are all sorcerers of at least moderate strength. They are icons of power, eliciting fear and a fanatical loyalty in the hearts all of their subjects. Savants frequently accept students from promising families. Most of these youths suffer terrible fates, consumed alive by spiders, subjected to awful experimentation or simply becoming playthings

for the savant's demonic servants. From amongst the casualties arises the occasional promising student, who kills his rivals with ruthless efficiency, eventually slipping a slender blade between the ribs of



an irregular burst affecting one side more heavily than the other side.

### Spell-slaver (Derro)

You are better at using magic to subdue and capture rather than kill.

**Prerequisite:** Spellcaster 3rd+.

he is exposed to sunlight, and he dies if his Constitution score reaches 0. Derro recover lost Constitution points at the rate of 1 per every 24-hour period spent underground or otherwise sheltered from the sun.



his master to rise to the full rank of savant.

Not all savants succumb to the hands of their pupils. Some become so powerful that no student could ever hope to overcome them. These master savants occupy a very small portion of the derro population, so small that even the most learned sages know nothing of them. Below is a prestige class that reflects the ultimate realisation of a savant's power; enter the master savant.

### Master Savant

Among the derro, there is a class of savants that far exceeds the powers and abilities of other spellcasters. These esoteric individuals occupy the highest levels of derro society, ruling from the shadows, plotting against the other denizens of the Underdark to secure more land, treasure and slaves. Most of these master savants appear as other derro, sharing the same physical qualities as any other. They favour the dress and customs of the rest of their people. In fact, the only difference in appearance between most master savants and other savants is the mad gleam in their eyes, the wild mood swings and the imperious tones of their voices. However, the true master savants, the ones who undergo apotheosis, are nothing like the other derro. The warping effects of the Underdark take their toll on their features, reducing them to freakish parodies of men and dwarves.

Master savant Non-Player Characters rely on their subjects to carry out their will. They prefer to rule from the shadows, submitting subliminal orders through propaganda. Their whims can whip the derro into a warlike frenzy impelling them to undertake suicidal forays against the more numerous and better armed

draw, deep gnomes or worse. If the master savant has any reason whatsoever, it is beyond the ken of the sane.

**Hit Die:** d4

### Requirements

To qualify to become a master



savant, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

**Race:** Derro

**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil.

**Skills:** Bluff 18 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 18 ranks, Knowledge (any two) 9 ranks.

**Feats:** Leadership, Psychotic (see above).

**Special:** Must have the ability to cast 6th-level spells as a sorcerer or bard does. In addition, the candidate must eat the living brain of another savant.

### Class Skills

The master savant's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Disguise (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (all skills, taken

individually) (Int), Move Silently (Dex) and Spellcraft (Int).

**Skill points at each level:** 4 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the master savant prestige class.

#### Weapon and Armour Proficiency:

Master savants are proficient with all simple weapons and all repeating crossbows. They are not proficient with any type of armour or shield. Armour of any type interferes with a master savant's arcane gestures, which can cause spells with somatic components to fail.

**Spellcasting:** For every level advanced in the master savant prestige class, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever spellcasting class he belonged to prior to adding levels in this prestige class. He does not gain any other benefits advancing in that class would normally confer such as an extra Hit Die, Skill Points, feats or anything aside from the additional spellcasting ability. Essentially, the character adds 1 level to his spellcasting class to determine spells per day, spells known and caster level. If the caster had more than one spellcasting class prior to advancing in master savant, he must decide to which class he adds the level.

**Sneak Attack:** If a master savant can catch an opponent when he is unable to defend himself effectively from his attack, he can strike a vital spot for extra damage. The master savant's attack deals extra damage any time his target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to Armour Class (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the master savant flanks his target. This extra damage is 1d6 at 1st level, and it increases to 2d6 at 3rd level. Should the master savant score a critical hit with a sneak attack, do not multiply this extra damage. Ranged attacks can count as sneak attacks only if the target is within 30 feet.

With a sap (blackjack) or an unarmed strike, a master savant can make a sneak attack that deals subdual damage instead of lethal damage. He cannot use a weapon that deals lethal damage to deal non-lethal damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual  $-4$  penalty. A master savant can sneak attack only living creatures with discernible anatomies—undead, constructs, oozes, plants and incorporeal creatures lack vital areas to attack. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is not vulnerable to sneak attacks. The master savant must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. A master savant cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment or striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach.

**Collective Insight (Ex):** The master savant awakens his awareness to incorporate the collective unconscious of his derro clan. Though this awareness is absolute, he has limited control over what information he gains at any given time. Once per day, per point of his Charisma modifier, and only if he succeeds a Concentration check (DC 20), the master savant gains a weird understanding of a particular situation. In effect, he gains a  $+20$  insight bonus to any skill check. The effect of Collective Insight lasts for that one round only and then fades as the tumult of dead voices overwhelms him.

**Hive Mind (Ex):** The master savant gains the limited effects of Hive Mind when in the presence of other derro. He is, in effect, aware of the thoughts of all derro within 500 feet. The master savant is flatfooted only if all derro within 50 feet of him are flatfooted too. Likewise, the master savant is only flanked if all derro within 50 feet are flanked.

**Apotheosis (Su):** At 5th level, the master savant undergoes a horrific transformation into something no longer derro. His features twist and melt, while he grows in size to Medium. His eyes become as large and empty as dinner plates, while a constant stream of milky white fluid leaks from his slack mouth. He no longer speaks, communicating through telepathy with a range of 500-feet. Language is not a barrier. The master savant's type changes to outsider with the chaotic and evil subtypes. He gains damage reduction  $5/\text{lawful good}$ , and may no longer be restored to life from death by any means short of a *miracle* or *wish*.



Finally, he casts all spells with the evil or chaotic descriptors at  $+1$  caster level.



### Master Savant

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Sneak Attack +1d6	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+0	+3	+3	Collective Insight	+1 level of existing class
3	+2	+1	+3	+3	Sneak Attack +2d6	+1 level of existing class
4	+3	+1	+4	+4	Hive Mind	+1 level of existing class
5	+3	+1	+4	+4	Apotheosis	+1 level of existing class

# Taking Santa Down

Jonny Nexus



When I was a kid I was terrified of Father Christmas (a.k.a. Santa Claus). I was convinced that if I were still awake when he arrived, he would bear down upon me with righteous anger and furious vengeance.

I very much believed in the Old Testament Father Christmas.

All in all, I was never one of his biggest fans. I didn't mind the presents. It was the breaking into my house in the middle of the night I had a problem with<sup>1</sup>.

So who is this Santa bloke and, more importantly, what's in it for you?

Well his history is a bit confused, but the available evidence suggests that he was born in what is now modern-day Turkey sometime between 260 and 280 AD, and named Nicholas. Overcoming the death by disease of his wealthy parents, he became Bishop of Myra, where he gained a reputation for generosity and skilled administration. However, under the later rule of the Emperor Diocletian, he was imprisoned for several years in an attempt to break his Christian faith. The attempt failed, but the savage facial beatings to which his captors daily subjected him burst all the blood vessels in his face, leaving him with the permanently red cheeks that he is still known for today<sup>2</sup>.

Today – in addition to his proper title of Saint Nicholas, by which he is known through much of Europe – he goes by a variety of aliases, including Father Christmas in Britain and Grandfather Frost in the former Soviet Union. However, it is now thought that he is trying to consolidate around a single, world-wide 'Santa Claus' brand. He used to



dress predominantly in furs, but since a groundbreaking 1930s sponsorship deal with a soft-drinks company, he's sported a predominantly red costume, with white trim.

Though Santa is still a huge cultural icon, his image has started to slip of late. There have always been allegations of elven slave labour at his polar production complex, but questions are now being asked about his unauthorised copying of trademarked brands such as Lego, and his repeated, gross violations of computer games software copyright. Questions are also being asked about

his habit of 'drink-driving' a sleigh on Christmas night<sup>3</sup>. In addition, many observers are starting to question the motivations behind his gift giving, to the extent that when he makes personal appearances, he is now usually prohibited from encouraging children to sit on his lap<sup>4</sup>. In 1968, in a clear sign of changing attitudes, the Catholic Church's Vatican II council – citing a need to free-up time for 'local customs' – removed St Nicholas's Day from its universal liturgical calendar, a move which close friends said left him feeling 'angry' and 'betrayed'.

That has covered a little of the question of who he is. What about my second question: What's in it for you?

Well consider this: In a typical year, Santa will visit 2,462,097,519 children in nearly 200 countries delivering presents with a total value in excess of 20 billion dollars<sup>6</sup>, much of it highly 'fenceable' electronic goods.

I think that covers the 'why?' and we've already done the 'who?' which just leaves us with 'when?', 'where?' and 'how?'.

It's a little known fact that Santa actually makes three 'present runs' a year: To continental Europe on December 6<sup>th</sup>; to North America and the British Commonwealth on December 25<sup>th</sup>; and to Eastern Europe and Russia on January 7<sup>th</sup> (the Orthodox Christmas). So you have three opportunities to get him. (Or if you're especially vicious, you can think of this as giving you the opportunity to do him three times over – how funny would it be when he sees you guys for the **third** time, and thinks: 'Not them again!').

When considering the question of when to do him, we also have to consider what time of night to take him down. We have already discussed his considerable intake of alcohol, so it's clear that we should intercept him towards the middle of his run, when he's pretty tanked up, and as a result will suffer penalties to both his Dexterity and his Base Attack Bonus, but will still have a good load of presents. However, while this is a fine theoretical objective, it is hard to achieve, since so little is known about the route Santa takes on Christmas night. Many people have theorised that he visits North America first, because they have the most presents and he wants to lighten his load. However, the most popularly accepted theory is that he follows the sunset, starting first in New Zealand, then working his way through Australia, Europe and finally the Americas, moving

from the East Coast to the West. The answer therefore is clear: Ambush him in New England, when he's pretty drunk and tired after a long Trans-Atlantic flight, but is still carrying the presents destined for the entire North American continent.

We now have a rough geographical location, but we must still answer the question as to how to intercept him, given that he's moving at inhuman speeds, and delivering to millions of households in our chosen area. The answer is obvious: Wait for him at a house where he'll be making a delivery. The morally challenged could just break into a house where sleeping children (someone else's presumably) are waiting for presents, and then attack him when he arrives. Alternatively, if you're worried about the risk to innocent bystanders, then you should pick a child-free house (preferably not your own, in case he comes back after you) and then:

1. Leave a 'present list' there around the middle of December. Apparently, he'll pick that up in the middle of the night<sup>7</sup>.
2. Visit him when he is making a personal appearance at a department store, and give him your present list verbally. (Though unless you're exceptionally youthful looking, this might come across as a tad suspicious, and you'll look damn stupid if you try to sit on his knee.)
3. Send him an email via [www.santa.com](http://www.santa.com)

So now we get to the final question: Having got the old geezer cornered, how precisely are you going to separate him from his gifts and, having done that, precisely how do you propose to make your getaway? The first thing we have to consider is what powers and abilities Santa possesses. No definitive list exists, but they are thought to include:

**Super Speed:** Given that Santa delivers to around half a billion households in a single night – a

record which embarrasses the hell out of the Post Office, and holds up pretty well against private organisations such as UPS and Federal Express – he is clearly capable of operating at speeds far in excess of human norm.

**Multiple Selves:** It's well known that Santa is capable of spawning multiple versions of himself, thus enabling him to exist simultaneously in tacky department store grottoes located all across the developed world<sup>8</sup>. What isn't known is whether or not he also uses this power for delivery, although many people have pointed out that this would explain the apparent conundrum of one man delivering parcels to hundreds of millions of homes in a single night. If he is indeed using this power, then there is both a good and bad side for you. On the bad side, the value of the goods he's carrying will be far less, since it's only a fraction of the total haul. However, on the good side, if he's already 'split' himself, then it's far less likely that he can do it again, and it indicates that his Super Speed powers might not be so great. But the point is this: When you engage him in combat, be aware that he might suddenly split into multiple selves, all with at least one attack.

**Longevity:** Santa has lived for more than seventeen hundred years. But then he's probably never had the misfortune to encounter gits like you, has he?

**Magical Sleigh:** We know the sleigh has at least two major powers. Firstly, it is capable of at least hypersonic speeds. Secondly, it ignores encumbrance limits. This means that you have two main points to bear in mind:

If you let him get to the sleigh, you'll never catch up with him. Given that encumbrance rules do apply to you, the sleigh is the only hope you have of getting away with his entire haul of gifts. I have no idea how you get the sleigh to fly, but whipping the hell out of the reindeer until they get the general idea is probably the way to go.

So, the final attack plan is this: Wait until he has entered the house, preferably ambushing him just as he's drinking the booze. Always keep between him and the sleigh. Go in hard and fast, and be prepared for him to spawn multiple clones. When he's down, get in the sleigh and get the hell out of there.

Good luck. I suspect you'll need it and, in the words of the immortal Billy Butlin: 'Book early for Christmas.'<sup>9</sup>



*'Have a merry Christmas...  
or I send the elves round!'*

<sup>1</sup>Then again, I was also terrified of clowns, so maybe it's just me.

<sup>2</sup>I always find this fact (the answer to the question: 'Why has Santa got a red face?') a useful conversational piece to toss into any Christmas gathering which is in danger of turning overly sentimental.

<sup>3</sup>Santa can visit as many as half a billion homes in a single night. Since practically everyone except the Methodists<sup>4</sup> leaves him a glass of wine or beer, we can speculate that Santa is drinking in excess of 500 million units of alcohol in a single night. Although laws on blood-alcohol levels vary across the world, I'm pretty sure 500 million units will be illegal everywhere, except possibly Russia. . . (It's around 125 million times the legal limit in the UK for example).

<sup>4</sup>Methodists don't drink alcohol. I was brought up in a Methodist family, and we just used to leave him a biscuit and a glass of milk. All the other kids at school seemed to get better presents. It's all starting to make sense now.

<sup>5</sup>Much like Catholic priests, as it happens, although in the interests of fairness I should stress that unlike the Catholic Church, Santa has never been successfully sued.

<sup>6</sup>Some of the facts in this article have been researched from sources such as the CIA World Factbook, some have been extrapolated from known information and the rest I just made up.

<sup>7</sup>Well that's what my mum told me, although I haven't been able to independently verify it.

<sup>8</sup>If ever you find yourself feeling guilty about mugging Santa, consider how much cash he's raking in from shamelessly prostituting himself to every single capitalist store chain going.

<sup>9</sup>The interfering editor added this bit. He has always wanted to see this in print and finally got the chance.

# Inside The Chainmail Bra

.... *there beats the heart of a true geek, despite the distracting weaponry.*

by Lucy Bond

It may come as something of a shock to many gamers but there are girls out there who roleplay as well. We thought it was about time we heard a woman's voice in S&P. Here goes. . .

Yes, I'm here to talk about female gamers. No doubt some of them are perusing this article, but if you, dear reader, are one of those males who believe we don't exist, I have to say that although I'm not living at the bottom of your garden and don't possess the ability to grant wishes, I am very much a part of the same reality you inhabit. Probably.

Now, it is true that the average female roleplayer found her hobby due to a male friend or partner's enthusiasm but that doesn't mean that our interest only lasts as long as the relationship. Sometimes it really sticks and before we know it we have a collection of 'lucky' twenty-siders, a sheaf of character and vehicle sketches and a stack of well-thumbed source books.

I speak as a roleplayer of about ten years' experience, having slowly graduated from watching games at conventions as a single SF fan to playing in campaigns that lasted many years and being able to bore for England if asked about one of my characters. Yes, I too am a gamer.

Geek and proud. Willing to stand up and proclaim my allegiance to grubby hex-mats and the Thieves' Guild to those who think that roleplaying is silly. Moreover, willing to do so when dressed as a pirate in a motorway service station café.

So, what is it like to be a female gamer? Well, male players frequently outnumber you and that can sometimes lead to problems with your game. If I, for instance, am

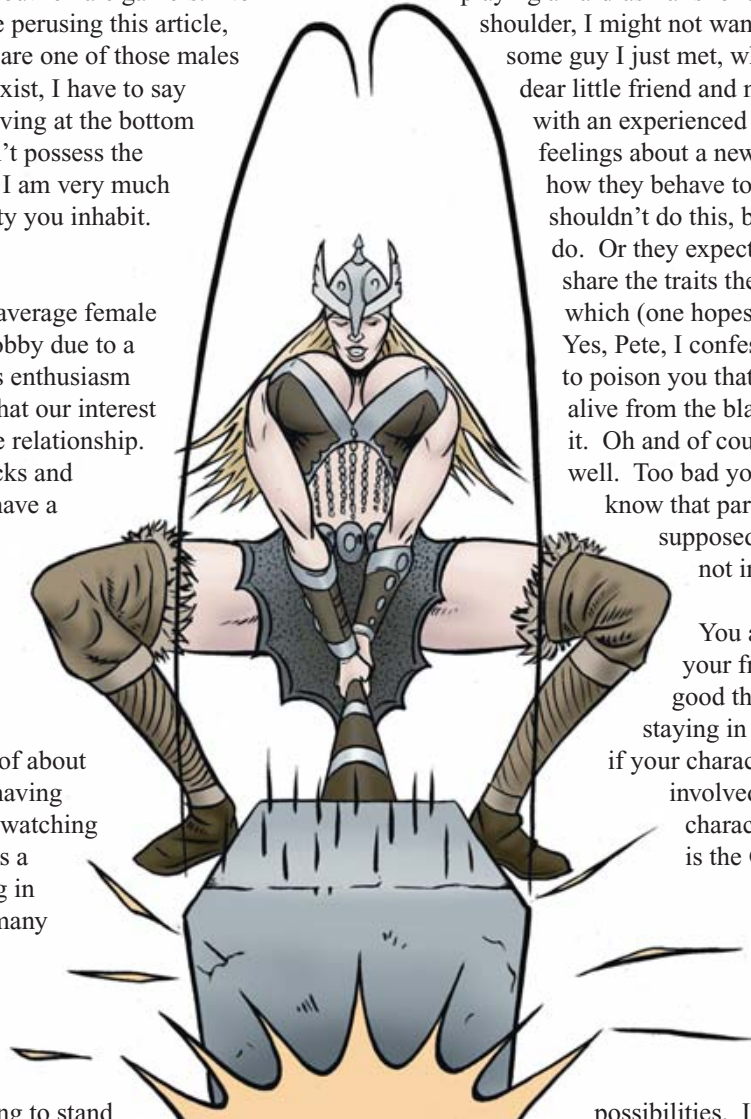
playing a hard-as-nails loner with a chip on her shoulder, I might not want to be best mates with some guy I just met, who is acting like I'm his dear little friend and need looking after. Even with an experienced group, players can let their feelings about a new female player influence how they behave to her character. No, they shouldn't do this, but in my experience, they do. Or they expect the female character to share the traits they know the player has, which (one hopes) isn't always the case. Yes, Pete, I confess. It was me who tried to poison you that night after we escaped alive from the black dragon. You deserved it. Oh and of course, the contract paid well. Too bad you survived. Next time I'll know that particular Drow concoction is supposed to go on my knife blade, not in your beer.

You also find out how mature your friends are, as well as how good they are at consistently staying in character, especially if your character gets romantically involved with another player's character while your boyfriend is the Games Master...

On the whole, though, I'd say being a female in a role-playing game is a great experience and I don't just mean because of the dating

possibilities. I'm here to keep the other players on their toes. I'm not here to play the spoiled princess or the selfless healer; I'm here to play the complicated woman with a mysterious past, or the heavy-drinking ship mechanic, or the sociopathic pre-teen vampire. I'm here to enjoy immersing myself in that character, one night a week and hopefully that will help the whole party - or not, as the case may be.

Welcome to my world.



# POWER CLASS: CHARISMATIC

Joseph Miller

Our Power Classes series have proved extremely popular, expanding the number of core character classes and providing much needed variety. Anyway, I rather thought it might be a good idea for *S&P* to have a few Power Classes in the magazine. Without further ado, here's the first!

For centuries charismatics have wandered the worlds as agents of deities and powers. They are often confused with clerics at first sight, but those who associate with them soon discover a fervour within them that is best described as being a living manifestation of the essence of the deities and powers they worship. They, like their deities, are varied in their nature and range from benevolent to indifferent to malevolent and everything in between.

**Adventurers:** Charismatics commonly adventure due to a desire to do their deity or power's will. They believe themselves to have a mission within the world to further their deity or power's influence over the world and seek to nurture their inborn connection with the divine. They are less organised than clerics and do not consider themselves as bound to the norms of clerical life. At times however they may receive requests for aid from fellow believers and though they are under no obligation they rarely turn down such requests without an important reason. Good charismatics can be great boons to those around them, while evil ones can cause ruin to their enemies.

**Characteristics:** Charismatics cast divine spells through their inborn connection to their deities or powers rather than simple prayer. They know fewer spells than clerics and take more experience to mature in

their spell casting abilities, but they gain access to more spells per day and have no need to select or prepare spells ahead of time. Charismatics also have special talents that help form their approach to the world. They, like clerics, can also channel divine energy and affect undead creatures by either turning or rebuking them. Charismatics have knowledge of the use of simple weapons, but do not normally train in the use of armour heavier than light.

**Alignment:** Charismatics are varied in alignment as the deities and powers they serve. Unlike clerics, no alignment dominates the charismatics as they are not trained, but born. They also must be the same alignment as their chosen deities and powers.

**Religion:** Almost every deity and power has charismatics devoted to them. Seeing as charismatics are not trained they rarely involve themselves in the politics of their own faith preferring instead to grow in their personal connection with their deity or power.

**Background:** Charismatics are born, not bred. Though some charismatics come to accept their calling later in life they all feel the call from birth to become the mouthpiece and agent of their deity or power. They are free to conduct themselves as



they see fit and live outside the laws governing the acts of clerics, so long as they live according to the tenets of the particular deity or power they worship.

**Races:** Charismatics can be of any of the common and uncommon humanoids and, unlike clerics, they are quite common as adventurers since they rarely tie themselves to a specific church or religious organisation.

**Other Classes:** Charismatics see sorcerers and bards as kith and kin in many ways due to their similarities in casting and usually gregarious personalities, though sometimes charismatics will find themselves at odds with these two classes when their means or goals do not match. Charismatics often find themselves in a sometimes-heated competition with clerics and paladins to determine who will be a party's 'moral' compass.

## Game Rule Information

**Abilities:** Charisma is the most important ability for charismatics; it determines the potency of spells and how frequently you can cast

them. Charisma also affects the charismatic's ability to turn undead. A high Constitution improves the charismatic's hit points and Concentration score.

**Alignment:** Any. If the Charismatic serves a specific deity the charismatic's alignment must be within one step of his deity's, and it may not be neutral unless the deity's alignment is neutral. Choosing to serve a specific deity is optional.

**Hit Die:** d8

### Class Skills

The charismatic's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis),

**Table 1–1: The Charismatic**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Domains; Turn or Rebuke Undead
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Talent Path
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Improved Talent Path
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	
8	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6	
9	+6/+1	+6	+3	+6	
10	+7/+2	+7	+3	+7	
11	+8/+3	+7	+3	+7	Talent Path Mastery
12	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8	
13	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8	
14	+10/+5	+9	+4	+9	
15	+11/+6/+1	+9	+5	+9	
16	+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	
17	+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	
18	+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+11	
19	+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	
20	+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+12	

**Table 1–2: Spells per Day\***

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	5	2+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2	6	3+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3	6	4+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4	6	5+2	2+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
5	6	5+2	3+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
6	6	5+2	4+2	2+2	–	–	–	–	–	–
7	6	5+2	5+2	3+2	–	–	–	–	–	–
8	6	5+2	5+2	4+2	2+2	–	–	–	–	–
9	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	3+2	–	–	–	–	–
10	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	4+2	2+2	–	–	–	–
11	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	3+2	–	–	–	–
12	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	4+2	2+2	–	–	–
13	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	3+2	–	–	–
14	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	4+2	2+2	–	–
15	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	3+2	–	–
16	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	4+2	2+2	–
17	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	3+2	–
18	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	4+2	2+2
19	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	3+2
20	6	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2	5+2

\*In addition to the stated number of spells slots per day for 1st- through 9th-level spells, a charismatic gets two domain spell slots for each spell level, starting at 1st. The '+2' on this list represents that. These spells are in addition to any bonus spell slots for having a high Charisma.



Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Survival (Wis).

**Domains and Class Skills:** A charismatic who chooses Animal or Plant as one of his domains also has Knowledge (nature) (Int) as a class skill. A charismatic who chooses Knowledge as one of his domains also has all Knowledge (Int) skills as class skills. A charismatic who chooses Trickery as one of his domains also has Bluff (Cha), Disguise (Cha) and Hide (Dex) as class skills. See Deity, Domains, and Domain Spells, below, for more information.

**Skill Points per level:** 4 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

All of the following are class features of the charismatic.

**Armour and Weapon Proficiency:** Charismatics are proficient with all simple weapons and with light armour, but not shields. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand and Tumble.

Some deities have favoured weapons, and charismatics consider it a point of pride to wield them. A charismatic whose deity's favoured weapon is a martial weapon and who chooses War as one of his domains receives the Martial Weapon Proficiency feat related to that weapon for free, as well as the Weapon Focus feat related to that weapon.

**Aura (Ex):** A charismatic of a chaotic, evil, good, or lawful deity has a particularly powerful aura corresponding to his deity's

alignment. Charismatics who do not worship a specific deity, but choose the Chaotic, Evil, Good, or Lawful domain have a similarly powerful aura of the corresponding type.

**Spells:** A charismatic casts divine spells. To cast a spell a charismatic must have a Charisma score of 10 + the spell's level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a charismatic's spell is 10 + the spell's level + the charismatic's Charisma modifier.

The number of spells a charismatic knows is not affected by his Charisma bonus. The charismatic is considered to know his domain spells and a number of spells chosen from the charismatic's spell list.

A charismatic is limited to casting a certain number of spells of each level per day, but he need not prepare his

**Table 1–3: Spells Known\***

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	4	2+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2	5	2+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3	5	3+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4	6	3+2	1+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
5	6	4+2	2+2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
6	7	4+2	2+2	1+2	–	–	–	–	–	–
7	7	5+2	3+2	2+2	–	–	–	–	–	–
8	8	5+2	3+2	2+2	1+2	–	–	–	–	–
9	8	5+2	4+2	3+2	2+2	–	–	–	–	–
10	9	5+2	4+2	3+2	2+2	1+2	–	–	–	–
11	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	3+2	2+2	–	–	–	–
12	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	3+2	2+2	1+2	–	–	–
13	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	4+2	3+2	2+2	–	–	–
14	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	4+2	3+2	2+2	1+2	–	–
15	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	4+2	4+2	3+2	2+2	–	–
16	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	4+2	4+2	3+2	2+2	1+2	–
17	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	4+2	4+2	3+2	3+2	2+2	–
18	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	4+2	4+2	3+2	3+2	2+2	1+2
19	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	4+2	4+2	3+2	3+2	3+2	2+2
20	9	5+2	5+2	4+2	4+2	4+2	3+2	3+2	3+2	3+2

\*In addition to the stated number of spells known for 1st- through 9th-level spells, a charismatic is considered to know the domain spells available for each spell level, starting at 1st. The '+2' on this list represents that.

spells in advance. The number of spells he can cast per day is improved by any bonus spells gained from a high Charisma.

A charismatic takes more time to cast metamagic spells than he does to cast regular spells as per the bard and sorcerer classes. A charismatic may use a higher-level slot to cast a lower-level spell if he so chooses. The spell is still treated as its actual level, not the level of the slot used to cast it. Each charismatic must choose a time each day at which he regains his daily allotment of spells. Time spent resting has no effect on whether a charismatic can prepare spells and unlike clerics no prayerful devotion is necessary.

In addition to his standard spell slots, a charismatic gets two domain spell slots of each spell level, starting at 1st. When a charismatic casts a spell from one of these domain spell slots it must come from one of his two domains.

Upon reaching 4<sup>th</sup> level and at every even-numbered level thereafter (6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and so on), a charismatic can choose a new spell in place of one he already knows. In effect, the charismatic loses the old spell in exchange for the new one. The new spell's level must be the same as that of the spell being exchanged and must be at least two levels lower than the highest level charismatic spell he can cast.

### Deities, Domains and Domain

**Spells:** When your character becomes a charismatic, you may choose to have your character serve a specific deity. The charismatic's deity influences his alignment, what magic he can perform, his values, and how others see him. Choose two from among the deity's domains for your charismatic's domains. You can only select an alignment domain (such as Good) for your charismatic if his alignment matches that domain. If your charismatic is not devoted to a particular deity, you still select two domains to represent his spiritual inclinations and abilities (but the restriction on alignment domains still applies).

Each domain gives your charismatic access to two domain spell slots at each spell level, from 1st on up, as well as a granted power. Your charismatic gets the granted powers of all the domains selected. With access to two domain spell slots at a given spell level the charismatic can cast either of the spells made available by his domain in those slots. The charismatic may not use his domain spell slots to cast spells not on his domain spell list.

### Chaotic, Evil, Good and Lawful

**Spells:** A charismatic cannot cast spells of an alignment opposed to his own or to his deity's.

**Turn or Rebuke Undead:** A good charismatic (or a neutral charismatic who worships a good deity) has the supernatural ability to turn undead. Evil charismatics (and neutral charismatics who worship evil deities) can rebuke such creatures. Neutral charismatics of neutral deities can do one or the other (player's choice), depending on whether the charismatic is more proficient at wielding positive or negative energy. Once the player makes this choice, it cannot be reversed. This choice also determines whether the neutral charismatic can cast spontaneous cure or inflict spells (see above). A charismatic may attempt to turn or rebuke undead a number of times per day equal to three plus his Charisma modifier.

**Extra Turning:** As a feat, a charismatic may take Extra Turning. This feat allows the charismatic to turn undead four more times per day than normal. A charismatic can take this feat multiple times, gaining four extra daily turning attempts each time.

**Talent Path (Ex):** At 2<sup>nd</sup> level, a charismatic must select one of the following talent paths to pursue: exorcist, inquisitor, persuader, messenger, or wanderer.

If the charismatic selects exorcist he gains Extra Turning as a bonus feat.

If the charismatic selects inquisitor he gains Investigator as a bonus feat. If the charismatic selects messenger he gains Negotiator as a bonus feat. If the charismatic selects persuader he gains Persuasive as a bonus feat. If the charismatic selects wanderer he gains Self Sufficient as a bonus feat.

**Improved Talent Path (Ex):** At 6<sup>th</sup> level, a charismatic's aptitude in his talent path improves and he gains one of the following benefits depending upon his chosen path:

If the charismatic selected exorcist he gains a +2 bonus to his turn checks. If the charismatic selected inquisitor he gains the ability to reroll a Gather Information or Search check once per day before the Games Master declares whether the roll results in success or failure. You must take the result of the reroll even if it is worse than the original roll.

If the charismatic selected messenger he gains the ability to reroll a Diplomacy or Sense Motive once per day before the Games Master declares whether the roll results in success or failure. You must take the result of the reroll even if it is worse than the original roll.

If the charismatic selected persuader he gains the ability to reroll a Bluff or Intimidate once per day before the Games Master declares whether the roll results in success or failure. You must take the result of the reroll even if it is worse than the original roll.

If the charismatic selected wanderer he gains the ability to reroll a Heal or Survival check once per day before the Games Master declares whether the roll results in success or failure. You must take the result of the reroll even if it is worse than the original roll.

**Talent Path Mastery (Ex):** At 11<sup>th</sup> level, a charismatic's aptitude in his talent path improves and he gains one of the following benefits depending upon his chosen path:

If the charismatic selected exorcist he gains a +2 bonus to his turn damage. If the charismatic selected inquisitor he gains the ability to once per day add an insight bonus to a Gather Information or Search check equal to his levels in the charismatic class. If the charismatic selected messenger he gains the ability to once per day add an insight bonus to a Diplomacy or Sense Motive check equal to his levels in the charismatic class.

If the charismatic selected persuader he gains the ability to once per day add an insight bonus to a Bluff or Intimidate check equal to his levels in the charismatic class.

If the charismatic selected wanderer he gains the ability to once per day add an insight bonus to a Heal or Survival checks equal to his levels in the charismatic class.

**Bonus Languages:** A charismatic's list of bonus languages includes Celestial, Abyssal and Infernal, in addition to the bonus languages available to the character because of his race.

**Ex-Charismatics:** A charismatic who grossly violates the code of conduct expected by his god (generally acting in ways opposed to the god's alignment or purposes) loses all spells and class features and cannot gain levels as a charismatic of that god until he atones.

## Variant Charismatic Spell List

The following list is an alternative charismatic spell list from that provided to the cleric. This list excludes a variety of spells that do not fit the role of the charismatic as an untrained mystic type of character. Thus, charismatics have no access to the *bless water*, *consecrate*, and similar spells, in order to reserve those spells to the cleric class. This list also excludes alignment specific spells to keep them in the hands of those charismatics that truly represent the domains of Chaos, Evil, Good and Law. Other spells have been

dropped from the list due to other considerations most involving the feel of the charismatic class.

### 0th-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Create Water; Cure Minor Wounds; Detect Magic; Detect Poison; Guidance; Inflict Minor Wounds; Light; Purify Food and Drink; Read Magic; Resistance; Virtue*

### 1st-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Bane; Bless; Cause Fear; Command; Comprehend Languages; Cure Light Wounds; Divine Favour; Doom; Endure Elements; Inflict Light Wounds; Magic Weapon; Remove Fear; Sanctuary; Shield of Faith; Summon Monster I*

### 2nd-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Aid; Align Weapon; Augury; Bear's Endurance; Bull's Strength; Calm Emotions; Cure Moderate Wounds; Darkness; Death Knell; Delay Poison; Eagle's Splendour; Enthral; Hold Person; Inflict Moderate Wounds; Owl's Wisdom; Remove Paralysis; Resist Energy; Restoration, Lesser; Shatter; Shield Other; Silence; Sound Burst; Spiritual Weapon; Summon Monster II; Zone of Truth*

### 3rd-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Animate Dead; Bestow Curse; Blindness/Deafness; Contagion; Continual Flame; Create Food and Water; Cure Serious Wounds; Daylight; Deeper Darkness; Dispel Magic; Inflict Serious Wounds; Invisibility Purge; Locate Object; Magic Vestment; Prayer; Protection from Energy; Remove Blindness/Deafness; Remove Curse; Remove Disease; Searing Light; Speak with Dead; Summon Monster III; Water Walk*

### 4th-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Air Walk; Control Water; Cure Critical Wounds; Death Ward; Discern Lies; Dismissal; Divination; Divine Power; Freedom of Movement; Imbue with Spell Ability; Inflict Critical Wounds;*

*Magic Weapon, Greater; Neutralise Poison; Planar Ally, Lesser; Poison; Repel Vermin; Restoration; Sending; Spell Immunity; Summon Monster IV; Tongues*

### 5th-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Atonement; Break Enchantment; Command, Greater; Commune; Cure Light Wounds, Mass; Disrupting Weapon; Flame Strike; Inflict Light Wounds, Mass; Insect Plague; Mark of Justice; Plane Shift; Raise Dead; Righteous Might; Scrying; Slay Living; Spell Resistance; Summon Monster V; True Seeing*

### 6th-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Animate Objects; Antilife Shell; Banishment; Bear's Endurance, Mass; Bull's Strength, Mass; Create Undead; Cure Moderate Wounds, Mass; Dispel Magic, Greater; Eagle's Splendour, Mass; Find the Path; Forbiddance; Geas/Quest; Harm; Heal; Heroes' Feast; Inflict Moderate Wounds, Mass; Owl's Wisdom, Mass; Planar Ally; Summon Monster VI; Undeath to Death; Wind Walk*

### 7th-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Control Weather; Cure Serious Wounds, Mass; Destruction; Ethereal Jaunt; Inflict Serious Wounds, Mass; Regenerate; Repulsion; Restoration, Greater; Resurrection; Scrying, Greater; Summon Monster VII*

### 8th-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Antimagic Field; Create Greater Undead; Cure Critical Wounds, Mass; Discern Location; Earthquake; Fire Storm; Planar Ally, Greater; Inflict Critical Wounds, Mass; Spell Immunity, Greater; Summon Monster VIII*

### 9th-LEVEL CHARISMATIC SPELLS

*Astral Projection; Energy Drain; Etherealness; Gate; Heal, Mass; Implosion; Miracle; Soul Bind; Storm of Vengeance; Summon Monster IX; True Resurrection*

# CONAN

## ROLEPLAYING IN THE HYBORIAN AGE

Ian Sturrock

In previous issues we have looked at character generation, sorcery and codes of honour. There is, however, one subject which dominates Conan and his world above any other – combat.

The plan was always to make combat a little more dynamic than it is in most d20 games. So, everyone can Spring Attack, just to encourage a bit of moving around in combat. Everyone can use something similar to Weapon Finesse too, in that they can use certain weapons predominantly with Dexterity rather than Strength, but finesse fighting involves a few other changes too. For most weapons, damage is a little higher than we are used to – the big two-handed weapons are especially monstrous in their effects, but then, when Conan wields a war-axe or greatsword or tulwar, he does tend to cleave through his foes even more quickly than when armed with his trademark broadsword.

Armour absorbs damage rather than making you harder to hit. This is a bit of a departure for a medieval-setting game rather than a modern one, but it seems to make sense in Conan. When our favourite Cimmerian is fighting against foes armed with primitive spears and clubs, they are often unable to scratch him because of his mail hauberk or other armour. Wounds he does receive are reduced in severity due to the armour. Both these things really necessitate damage-reducing armour.

I mentioned earlier that combat had to be dynamic. One of the most important ways to achieve this is by including plenty of tactical options in a game. Most d20 games do this by having magic be an important part of combat, so even non-spellcasters might have several different options depending on which magical item they wish to employ to defeat their foes. Conan adds a stack on new combat manoeuvres, similar to the core system's *Sunders* and *Trips* but a little more specific in their application. These are the kind of things that will likely only be used by gamers who are really familiar with the system, but in a long-running campaign they should really add to a player's options during combat.

So, for your enjoyment and edification, here's a sprinkling of the weapons, combat rules and combat manoeuvres for the game.

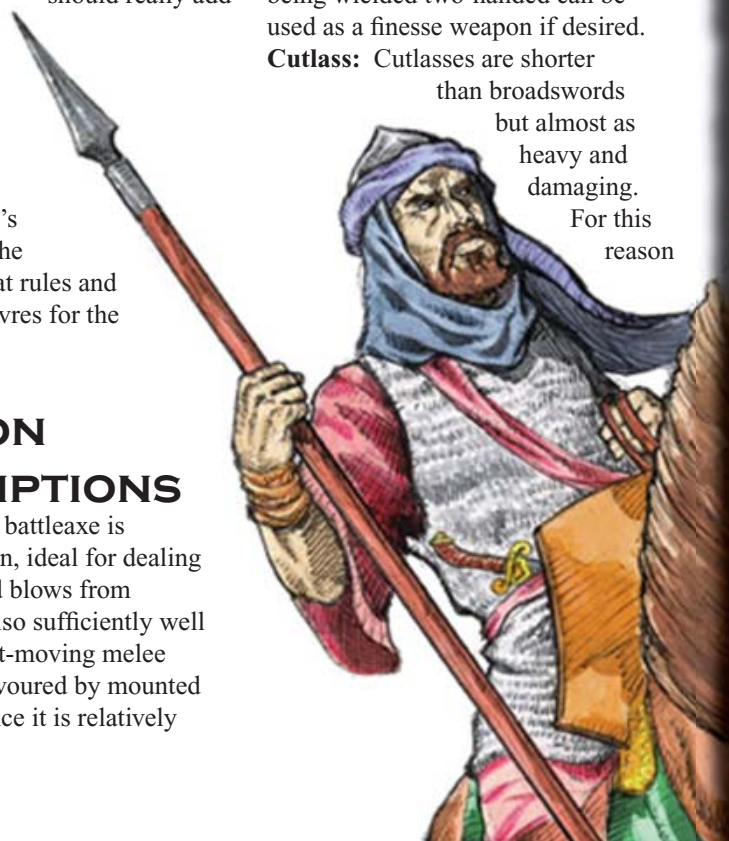
### WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

**Battleaxe:** The battleaxe is powerful weapon, ideal for dealing deadly overhead blows from horseback but also sufficiently well balanced for fast-moving melee combat. It is favoured by mounted mercenaries, since it is relatively

cheap but highly effective against armoured enemies.

**Broadsword:** This heavy, slightly tapered sword is intended for battlefield use, and is often wielded by knights expecting to face lightly armoured enemies. It is too expensive for most mercenaries, but many adventurers favour broadswords for their good balance and reasonable effectiveness against armour. Though the broadsword's handgrip is clearly only long enough for one hand to grip it comfortably, the pommel is large and often disc-shaped, allowing for a warrior to get his second hand behind the blow if need be and use the weapon two-handed. A broadsword being wielded two-handed can be used as a finesse weapon if desired.

**Cutlass:** Cutlasses are shorter than broadswords but almost as heavy and damaging. For this reason



Martial Weapons									
One-Handed Melee Weapons	Cost	Damage	Critical	Armour Piercing	Range	Hardness	Hit Points	Weight	Type
Battleaxe	5 sp	1d10	X3	4	-	7	5	3 lb.	Slashing
Broadsword*	125 sp	1d10	19-20/x2	3	-	10	5	2½ lb.	Slashing
Cutlass	50 sp	1d10	19-20/x2	2	-	8	5	2 lb.	Slashing
Knife, Zhaibar	25 sp	1d12	X2	1	-	8	6	3 lb.	Slashing
Lance, Heavy*	7 sp	1d10	X3	3	-	5	8	7 lb.	Piercing
Lance, Light*	5 sp	1d10	X3	2	-	5	5	4 lb.	Piercing
Scimitar	75 sp	1d8	18-20/x2	2	-	10	5	2½ lb.	Slashing
Sword, Arming	100 sp	1d10	19-20/x2	2	-	10	4	2 lb.	Slashing or Piercing
Warhammer	7 sp	1d6	X3	7	-	7	4	4 lb.	Bludgeoning or Piercing

\* See the weapon description for special rules.  
Finesse weapon.

they are much-used by pirates, who need a weapon that is not likely to get entangled in rigging or stuck in the low ceilings below decks. Any one-handed weapon other than the cutlass, which is wielded in such a low-ceilinged environment, is used with a -2 circumstance penalty.

**Knife, Zhaibar:** The Zhaibar knife is as long as most swords, though it is shaped very much like a large knife, with a thicker blade than any sword. It is used throughout Ghulistan. The blade is three feet long, triangular, and intended only for slashing rather than thrusting. Most Zhaibar knives are bone-handled.

**Lance, Heavy:** A heavy lance used from the back of a charging mount does double damage and has a +2 circumstance bonus to Armour Piercing. A heavy lance has reach: you can use it against opponents ten feet away, but you may not use it against an adjacent enemy. Heavy lances are intended for use when mounted, and are unbalanced for use on foot – if used while dismounted, treat a heavy lance as a war spear with a -2 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls.

**Lance, Light:** A light lance used from the back of a charging mount does double damage and has a +1 circumstance bonus to Armour Piercing. Light lances are intended for use when mounted, but can still be reasonably effective on foot – if used

while dismounted, treat a light lance as a hunting spear.

**Scimitar:** The scimitar is the Eastern equivalent of the sword, with a heavy, curved blade that provides extreme cutting power. It is the most common weapon among Hyrkanian and Shemite nomads.

**Sword, Arming:** The arming sword resembles the broadsword but is slightly shorter and lighter, and often not quite so well made. Knights carry it as a backup weapon and mercenaries whose main weapon is a broadsword, battleaxe, heavy mace or two-handed weapon, and is also used by some archers and crossbowmen. Furthermore it is the only one of the one-handed weapons light enough to be a finesse weapon. Nobles and other well-to-do types often wear well-made, fancy-looking versions of the arming sword about town, since it does not attract quite so much attention as the more obviously military broadsword.

**Warhammer:** Though referred to as a warhammer, this weapon has a head that more closely resembles a meat tenderiser, used for bashing in the joints of an armoured opponent. The spike on the reverse of the head looks a little like a pickaxe blade and can be used to pierce right through heavy armour. The head is mounted on a three-foot long shaft of ash, allowing for good leverage.

## Akbitanan Weapons

The expertise of the Akbitanan smiths combined with a superb source of high-grade steel mined locally to the city produces weapons that have near-perfect balance, unsurpassed hardness, and a strength and flexibility that renders them almost indestructible. Akbitanan weapons can generally be found for sale only in Akbitana itself – these weapons are so famed that the smiths of that city have more than enough business without actively exporting their wares.

Almost all Akbitanan-manufactured weapons are martial or exotic, with bladed arms such as daggers, swords and scimitars being the Akbitanan smiths' preferred products. It might just be possible to persuade an Akbitanan smith to manufacture another weapon, but they are unlikely to be willing to make a hafted weapon such as a spear or axe. This is because such a weapon must rely on a wooden shaft for much of its strength, and no smith can guarantee the strength of wood.

Akbitanan weapons grant an enhancement bonus of +1 to attack rolls and +2 to Armour Piercing. Furthermore, they have 1.5 times the usual Hardness and double the usual hit points for the weapon type (round down). An Akbitanan weapon costs

five times the cost of the base weapon (minimum 50 sp).

For example, an Akbitanan war sword gives +1 to all attack rolls, has an Armour Piercing of 6, Hardness of 15, and 16 hit points. It costs 750 sp.

## COMBAT

### Two-Weapon Fighting

If a combatant wields a second weapon in the off hand, that combatant can get one extra attack per round with that weapon when he takes a full attack action.

Fighting in this way is very hard, however, and a combatant suffers a -6 penalty to both his main weapon and his off-hand weapon attack rolls.

A combatant can reduce these stiff penalties in two ways:

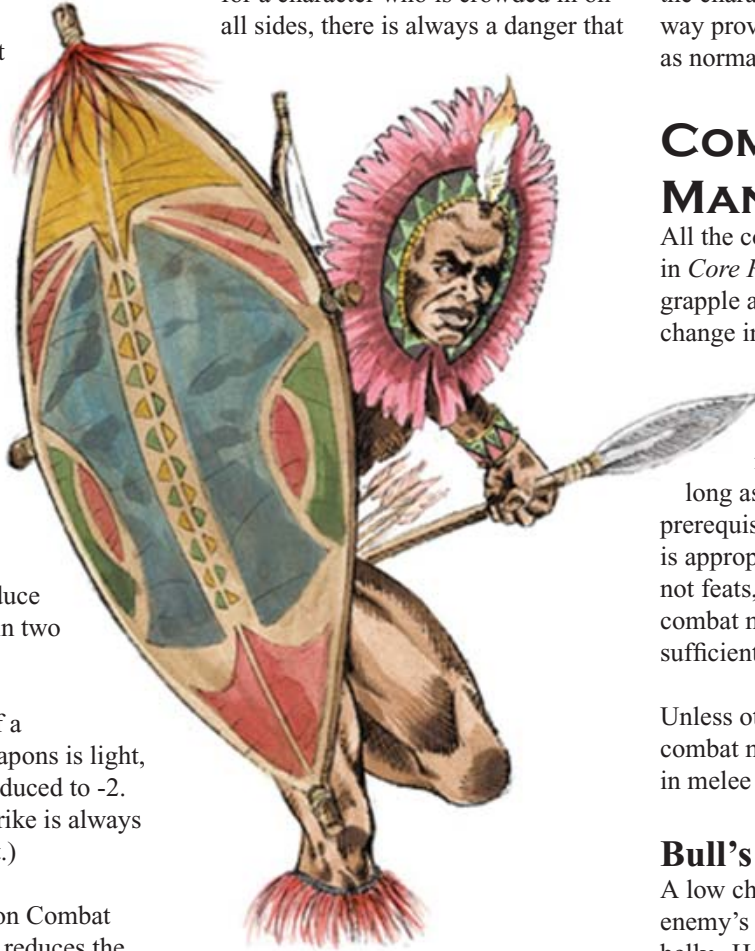
- † If at least one of a combatant's weapons is light, the penalty is reduced to -2. (An unarmed strike is always considered light.)
- † The Two-Weapon Combat Proficiency feat reduces the penalties associated with two-weapon fighting by 2. Thus a character with this feat has only a -4 penalty to both attacks if using two one-handed weapons, or no penalty at all if at least one of his weapons is light.

For example, a 7<sup>th</sup> level soldier with Base Attack Bonus of +7/+2 could make two attacks with his primary weapon, at +7 and +2 respectively. Alternatively, with the Two-Weapon Fighting feat he could make two attacks with his primary weapon at +3 and -2 and one attack with a one-

handed secondary weapon at +3. Or, he could make two attacks with his primary weapon at +7/+2 and one attack with a light secondary weapon also at +7.

### Multiple Opponents

Even Conan fears being attacked by multiple foes, especially if they are at all well trained. As well as the potential reduction in Defence Value for a character who is crowded in on all sides, there is always a danger that



halfway competent foes will attack in concert, making it hard to defend against them all at once.

During each round of combat, if several characters use melee weapons to attack one enemy, each of the attackers after the first gains a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus on their attack rolls. These bonuses only ever apply to melee attacks.

Note that these bonuses are additional to flanking bonuses if applicable. Class features or feats that make

characters immune to being flanked do not affect the cumulative +1 circumstance bonus for multiple opponents.

### Fighting on the Run

When using the attack action with a melee weapon, any character can move both before and after the attack, provided that the character's total distance moved is not greater than the character's speed. Moving in this way provokes attacks of opportunity as normal, however.

## COMBAT

### MANOEUVRES

All the combat manoeuvres given in *Core Rulebook I*, such as trip and grapple attacks, can be used without change in the *Conan RPG* unless

otherwise noted in this section. The following new combat manoeuvres may also be freely used, so

long as the character meets the prerequisites and the circumstance is appropriate. Note that these are not feats, they are simply standard combat manoeuvres that anyone of sufficient skill can perform.

Unless otherwise noted, the following combat manoeuvres can only be used in melee combat.

### Bull's Charge

A low charge can get you under your enemy's guard to stab deep into his belly. However, doing so renders you vulnerable to a counterattack.

**Prerequisite:** Str 13+, Power Attack.

**Circumstance:** You must be wielding a slashing or piercing weapon, and charging.

**Effect:** You gain a +2 bonus on your damage roll when charging, but you provoke an attack of opportunity from your target before you can make your attack roll.

### Cat's Parry

You parry your opponent's wrist, rather than his blade.

**Prerequisite:** Base parry bonus +1 or higher.

**Circumstance:** You must be parrying.

**Effect:** Your attacker gains a +4 circumstance bonus to his attack roll, but if he misses, you may immediately make an attack of opportunity against him.

### Decapitating Slash

You take advantage of an opponent's dropped defences to slice his head clean off. This leaves you open to counterattack and so is usually only done if you are fighting a single opponent.

**Prerequisite:** Base attack bonus +10 or higher.

**Circumstance:** Your opponent provokes an attack of opportunity from you.

**Effect:** You attempt a particularly devastating attack of opportunity. If you score a critical hit against your opponent, he must make a Fortitude save (DC = 5 + total damage dealt, after taking into account armour) or be instantly killed, his head severed. You suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to your Defence Value for the one round immediately following your attack of opportunity.

### Desperate Stab

You make a stab for the heart or throat before combat has otherwise begun, relying on quickness but desperately gambling that your attack will be sufficient to slay the opponent instantly, since it leaves you wide open to a counterattack from him.

**Prerequisite:** Improved Initiative, base attack bonus +12 or higher.

**Circumstance:** You must have won initiative, it must be the first round of combat, you must have lost his dodge bonus or parry bonus to Defence Value through being flat-footed, and you must be attacking with finesse.

**Effect:** As your first attack of the combat, you may attempt to slay your enemy outright, relying on your speed and skill to slay your enemy instantly. You make your attack as normal. If

you hit, your opponent must make a Fortitude save (DC = damage dealt by your attack) or die instantly. If your opponent is still alive, he gains a +2 circumstance bonus to his attack rolls and damage against you for the remainder of the round.

### Devastating Sweep

You can swing your weapon around, forcing your foes back to clear sufficient space for you to flee.

**Prerequisite:** Whirlwind Attack.

**Circumstance:** You must be wielding a slashing weapon, either one-handed or two-handed. At least five of the squares adjacent to you must be occupied. You must not be attacking with finesse.



**Effect:** As a standard action, you may swing your weapon in a sweep around you. Any characters within 5 feet of you have the option of immediately taking a 5-foot step away from you as a free action, so as to be out of range. You gain an attack against any characters who do not choose to move away, at your highest Base Attack Bonus.

### Fling Aside

If you are sufficiently strong, you can simply pick up your enemy one-handed and hurl him aside.

**Prerequisite:** Str 15+, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip.

**Circumstance:** You must have one hand free.

**Effect:** Make a melee touch attack to grab your opponent, then an opposed

grapple check, just as though you were starting a grapple. If you win the opposed grapple check, your throw your opponent to the ground. You are not grappling him, but the impact with the ground deals damage to him as though you had hit him with an unarmed strike, and he is prone as though you had tripped him.

### Hooking Parry

You swing your axe (or similar martial weapon) around the shaft of your enemy's weapon, holding it out of line so it cannot be used.

**Prerequisite:** Base parry bonus +1 or higher, Dexterity 13+.

**Circumstance:** You have just used an axe, battleaxe, bill, bardiche or polearm to parry an enemy's reach weapon.

**Effect:** So long as you do not use the parrying weapon for any other purpose (including making further attacks or parries) your opponent may not use his reach weapon for any purpose either. As a standard action he may make an attack roll with his weapon, opposed to your parry roll with your weapon. If he is successful with this opposed attack roll, or if you move out of range of his reach weapon, he may wield his weapon normally again.

### Human Shield

You swing your distracted enemy around so as to attempt to parry another enemy's attack with the body.

**Prerequisite:** Strength 13+.

**Circumstance:** Earlier this round you have dealt damage to your opponent while grappling him, and are now being attacked by another character while still grappling the first.

**Effect:** If you succeed in a grapple check, you may use your grappled opponent to parry with, just as though he were a shield. The parry bonus you gain from him is equal to (your Strength bonus -1), with a minimum of +0 and a maximum of +2 – he is large, but is somewhat awkward to move about even when using both

hands. If you successfully parry the second opponent's attack, full damage from that attack is dealt to the opponent you are grappling.

### Leaping Charge

**Prerequisites:** Base Attack Bonus +6 or higher, Jump skill

**Effect:** When you make a charge attack, you may make a second attack at your highest Base Attack Bonus, though both attacks are at a -2 circumstance penalty, and the circumstance penalty to your Defence Value for charging is increased from the usual -2 to -4.

### Pantherish Twist

When two attackers attempt to flank you, you twist away at the last moment, forcing them to attack one another.

**Prerequisite:** Improved Uncanny Dodge.

**Circumstance:** Must be dodging.

**Effect:** If two opponents move into positions which usually would allow them to flank you if you did not have Improved Uncanny Dodge, you can choose to force both of them to make opposed Dexterity checks with you. If one or both of them lose the opposed Dexterity check with you, he or they must attack the other enemy instead of attacking you. However, if one or both of them win the opposed Dexterity check, there is a +2 circumstance bonus on his or their attack and damage rolls against you. These effects only ever apply to the first attack each opponent makes.

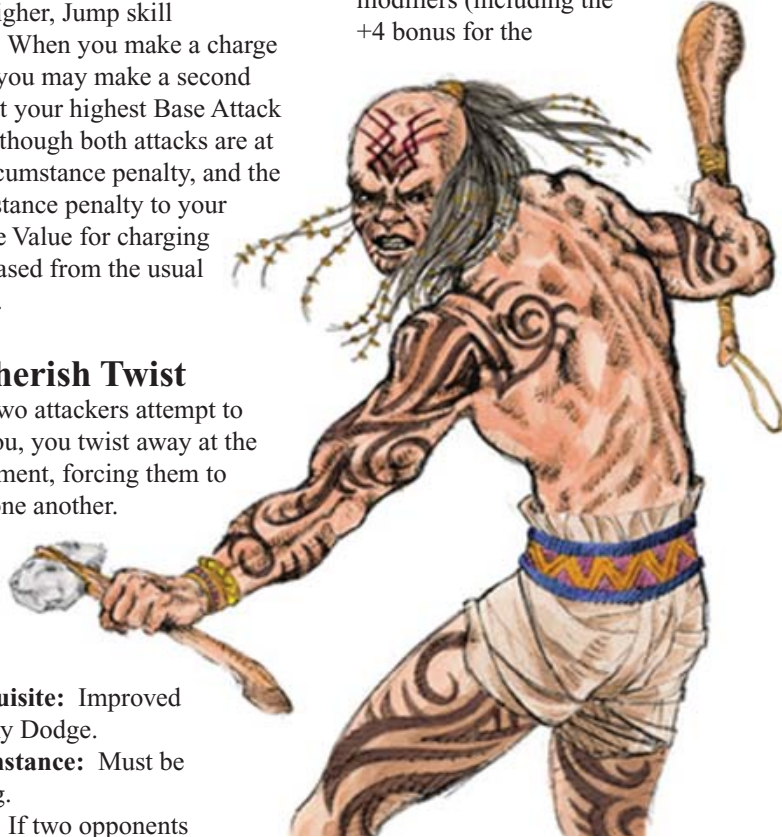
### Sundering Parry

Rather than simply setting aside your opponent's weapon, you attempt to hack it through with your own.

**Prerequisite:** Improved Sunder, base parry bonus +1 or higher.

**Circumstance:** Must be parrying.

**Effect:** You take a -2 circumstance penalty to your Parry roll. However, if you succeed in parrying the enemy's weapon, you may immediately make a sunder attempt as a free action, with all the usual modifiers (including the +4 bonus for the



Improved Sunder feat) and an additional -2 circumstance penalty.

### To the Hilt

You take advantage of your enemy's lack of armour to plunge your sword into his body a little more deeply.

**Prerequisite:** Power Attack

**Circumstance:** Must be attacking with a piercing or slashing weapon against an unarmoured opponent.

**Effect:** You gain a +1 circumstance modifier to your damage roll. However, if your damage rolled with the weapon (before any modifiers for Strength, sneak attacks and bonuses of any kind) is higher than your Strength modifier, your weapon sticks into your enemy – whether he is living or dead.

You or another character (including the one with the weapon stuck in him, if still alive) can remove a stuck weapon by taking a full-round action and making a Strength check (DC 10). Often characters will find it easier and quicker to draw or pick up an alternate weapon.

A character with a weapon stuck in him sustains 1d4 damage every time he takes a move, standard, or full-round action.

## WOUNDS, HEALING AND RECOVERY

### Massive Damage

If a character ever sustains damage so massive that 20 points of damage or more are inflicted in one deduction, and the character is not reduced below 0 hp outright, the character must make a Fortitude save.

**Massive Damage Fortitude Save**  
DC = 10 + (½ damage dealt)

If this saving throw fails, the character's hit point total is reduced to -1 and he is dying regardless of his previous hit points.

If some or all of the damage dealt by the attack was nonlethal, the character is instead knocked unconscious (and is helpless) for 3d6 rounds if he fails his saving throw.

### A Flagon of Wine

A character who is disabled (on exactly 0 hp) may be restored to 1 hp by drinking at least a pint of strong wine or other powerful liquor.

### Natural Healing

A character recovers (3 + Constitution modifier + 1 per character level) hit points (minimum 1) per day of rest. If the character undergoes complete bed rest (doing nothing for an entire day), the character recovers (6 + double Constitution modifier + 2 per character level) hit points (minimum. 2).







# Show Me The Money!



## Mercenary Client Rosters for Armageddon: 2089

Alejandro Melchor

The life of a mercenary company depends wholly on the contracts it is able to snag, which means that there is a very important part of mercenary life that is often left out of media shows: the client. Mercenaries are ultimately workers for hire, even if the work they perform involves blowing up research facilities.

You can find the rules for negotiating the contract terms for a given mission the company can undertake in the *Armageddon: 2089* main rulebook but, where do these contracts come from? Who is paying all this money to worsen the situation and sink the world in a deeper quagmire?

As a state government defines the existence of a national army, so do clients define mercenaries: without national loyalties, mercenaries are the perfect tool for tricky situations when a political party, corporation or even private individual wants something done, but cannot compromise other resources, or simply has no other means of getting the job done.

Whether the client needs a WarMek, armoured, aerial or Special Forces mercenary company, the nature of the job remains the same throughout the warfare spectrum; the difference is the scale. This article will help you come up with new clients and the missions they are paying for, fully compatible with the negotiation system outlined in the *Armageddon: 2089* main rulebook. As a Games Master, you can choose from the different options or use the table to generate a random client for those occasions that the players are looking for a job to make a little more money, either as a standalone story or integrated into an ongoing campaign.

### Negotiation Summary

#### Part One – The Money

1. Define mission type and base cost
2. TTC (Time To Completion) multiplier =  $1.0 + ((\text{days} - 1) / 10)$
3. Define complications
4. Apply Economic Multiplier
5. Base Offer =  $((\text{Mission Type Cost} \times \text{TTC multiplier}) + \text{Complications}) \times \text{Economic Multiplier}$

#### Part Two – Time

1. Analyse the proposal (Knowledge/Profession check DC 10-20, may be opposed by Bluff)
2. Analyse the employer (same as above)
3. Fact finding (Gather Information check, DC as step 1, +5)

#### Part Three – Attention

1. First Impressions (Diplomacy check, modified)
2. Diplomacy (opposed Diplomacy checks, one per debatable contract term)
3. Endgame (Diplomacy check DC 10 + client negotiator's Diplomacy ranks)

The first thing to determine about a client is his type, as this will determine the support the company can expect to receive or the terms they can try to push. As wealthy as a private individual is, he will not be able to provide aerial support regardless of how well the company rolled on the negotiation checks. A client for a mercenary force can be a corporate client, a political party, a criminal organisation or a private individual. Either determine the client's nature or roll a d20 in the corresponding table below.

### Client Type Table

d20	Client type
1-6	Corporate
7-9	Criminal
10-12	Mercenary
13-18	Political
19-20	Private

After that, you must determine the client's 'size', which means relative power and presence in the setting, and determines the kinds of resources it can muster when hiring a mercenary company. Each client type's description has its own size table, because different kinds of clients have access to different resources, regardless of their comparative size. Roll on the tables or define arbitrarily, taking into account the size modifiers for resources and negotiators; a client will rarely have assets or staff of lower quality than the minimum for its type and size.

**Budget:** A client's budget represents the maximum amount of money it can allow itself to spend on the

## The Client

A client can contact the company, or the company can approach a client, but the negotiations proceed based on the kind of job the client wants, and the conditions he imposes.

mercenary company. The negotiator will be aware of this sum, but will not disclose it to the company, seeking the best deal possible. Some clients may be able to pay up to double the amount of money for a contract, depending on the conditions. When determining the base offer of a mission during the first part of negotiations, multiply the base offer by the number in this column for the client's size to determine its maximum budget for mercenaries.

**Assets:** Just as mercenary companies have access to satellite, intelligence and even military assets, so can clients have their own resources, which they may offer as part of the payment or deduct from the contract's offer if required (which amounts to the same thing, but canny negotiators phrase the two differently to dupe inexperienced mercenaries). The Client Size tables show a modifier that applies to the client asset table, which means that even a private client may have access to top-notch intelligence assets... probably because he is a spy himself in need of quick extraction. The client's resources can give you an idea of who they are and how important the contact can be

for further assignments. The assets are the same as those available for Non-Player Character mercenary companies as detailed in Chapter 3 of the main rulebook, but note that these assets are those the client will offer to the mercenary company; they may have even greater assets for their own use. A double letter means that the client has double the assets, but not enough to carry him to the next level. Roll for each kind of asset, applying the asset modifier according to the client's type and size, or define what kind of asset the client has available.

**Negotiator:** The client's representative with prospective mercenary employees, this is a character that must be fleshed out in some detail in order for the player characters to interact with him (or her; large corporations know the advantages of having female negotiators on their payroll when handling macho male mercenaries). The number in the Client Size tables is a modifier to be used in the Negotiator section, to determine just how shrewd the negotiator is and what kind of challenge a company can expect.

**Example:** An example of the kind of what a client of the corresponding size is, or is expected to be and the kinds of missions he may likely seek mercenaries for.

### Corporate Clients

Only the largest corporations can afford to hire and maintain their own heavy weapons division, whether it is made up of WarMeks, armoured or aerial vehicles, infantry special forces or any combination of the above. Even those with their own security resources are sometimes reluctant to compromise them in risky missions or, more commonly, do not want direct involvement in certain situations, and so they hire mercenaries to do their work for them.

Corporate clients are tough negotiators, well used to conducting business and brokering deals. Mercenaries are simply another form of subcontractors that the client manages and, with the mercenary market being what it is, they can afford to expect the best when they pay for it.

### Corporate Client Sizes

d20	Size	Budget	Assets	Negotiator	Example
1-3	Tiny	x1.0	-2	-1	A local iron mill, a one-convoy shipping company.
4-7	Small	x1.2	-1	+0	A small import/exports business, a farming community.
8-11	Medium	x1.4	+0	+1	A research lab with a few branch offices, a small bank.
12-15	Large	x1.6	+1	+2	A big media conglomerate, multinational trader.
16-18	Huge	x1.8	+2	+4	An international bank, a car industry giant.
19-20	Gargantuan	x2	+4	+8	Égide, Ipex and the like.



### Corporate Client Assets

d20	Repair Facilities	Satellite	Air	Infantry	Armour	Artillery	Transport & Logistics	Intelligence	Computer
1-6	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
7-11	B	B	A	A	A	A	A	B	A
12-15	C	C	A	B	A	A	B	B	B
16-18	D	D or E	B	C	B	B	B	BB	BB
19-20	E	EE	B	D	C	B	BB	C	C

## Political Clients

Poor nations or city governments are often in need of mercenaries to protect their territory from the armies – or mercenaries – of an enemy power. With the escalation of the Armageddon War, conflict is engulfing every corner of the world, and more and more states are in need of a capable and professional military that they lack the means to develop by themselves. Defence is, of course, not the only reason why political entities hire mercenary companies. Great war machines are the perfect tool for engineering coups and striking at political enemies inside one's own land, only to blame the attack on someone else.

### Political Client Sizes

d20	Size	Budget	Assets	Negotiator	Example
1-4	Tiny	x1.0	-1	-4	Spy behind enemy lines, small city.
5-8	Small	x1.2	+0	-2	Disgruntled parliament member, medium city.
9-13	Medium	x1.4	+1	+0	A rebel force, a metropolis.
14-17	Large	x1.6	+2	+2	An important minister or secretary, a city-state like Kaliningrad.
18-19	Huge	x1.8	+3	+4	A small nation.
20	Gargantuan	x2	+4	+6	A large nation.

### Political Client Assets

d20	Repair Facilities	Satellite	Air	Infantry	Armour	Artillery	Transport & Logistics	Intelligence	Computer
1-4	A	C	B	D	B	A	A	B	B
5-8	B	D	C	D	B	B	B	C	C
9-12	C	E	D	DD	C	C	C	D	C
13-16	D	E	E	E	D	C	D	DD	D
17-20	DD	EE	E	EE	DD	CC	D	DDD	D

## Criminal Clients

Mercenaries should be very careful when taking clients who are known criminals (as opposed to political clients that can be closet criminals). Although the mercenary company is in an advantageous position as an outfit willing to take the risk of dealing with criminals, the client also has the advantage of having little or no legal obligation to honour his side of the bargain. In criminal dealings, one's word is more valuable than a legally binding contract, and a mercenary company is as good as its word when dealing with criminals. Suffice to say, most jobs that a company will be asked to do from a criminal client are bound to be quite illegal. The pay may be greater, but so are the risks, particularly for a company making a name for itself.



### Criminal Client Sizes

d20	Size	Budget	Assets	Negotiator	Example
1-3	Tiny	x1.2	-1	-4	A local band, an important criminal.
4-6	Small	x1.4	+0	-2	A city's underworld.
7-10	Medium	x1.6	+1	+0	A nation-wide underworld organisation.
11-14	Large	x1.8	+2	+1	A powerful cartel.
15-17	Huge	x2	+3	+2	A multinational Mafia.
18-20	Gargantuan	x2.2	+4	+4	A multinational terrorist organisation, a rogue intelligence agency.

### Criminal Client Assets

d20	Repair Facilities	Satellite	Air	Infantry	Armour	Artillery	Transport & Logistics	Intelligence	Computer
1-3	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	B
4-7	A	A	A	C	B	A	BB	B	C
8-12	A	B	A	CC	BB	A	CC	C	D
13-17	B	C	B	D	C	B	CC	D	D
18-20	BB	D	C	E	C	B	D	DD	DD

### Private Clients

Not many private individuals have the cash to hire a mercenary company, and those who do usually hire them using a corporation as a front, so the line between a private and a corporate client tends to blur. A private client offers low-impact assignments for the most part, although with enough money, any person may escalate a family feud to the ultimate level of blood-thirstiness. Only the smaller and newer mercenary companies take jobs from private concerns, unless the money is *really* good. Private clients cannot offer many of the perks the larger companies have come to expect from bigger clients, and so the private citizen is left to his own devices.



### Private Client Sizes

d20	Size	Budget	Assets	Negotiator	Example
1-3	Tiny	x0.9	-3	-4	A distraught relative.
4-6	Small	x1	-2	-2	A whole community.
7-10	Medium	x1.1	-1	+0	A wealthy community or citizen.
11-14	Large	x1.2	+0	+1	A very rich citizen
15-17	Huge	x1.3	+1	+2	A millionaire.
18-20	Gargantuan	x1.4	+2	+4	An important politician, executive or criminal acting behind his organisation's back.

### Private Client Assets

d20	Repair Facilities	Satellite	Air	Infantry	Armour	Artillery	Transport & Logistics	Intelligence	Computer
1-3	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
4-7	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B
8-12	B	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	B
13-17	C	B	A	B	B	A	B	B	C
18-20	C	C	B	C	B	B	B	C	D

### The Grapevine

Only the best mercenary companies know of it, and it is nothing more than a rumour amongst start-ups and wannabes. The Grapevine is a secret Internet billboard run from somewhere in the Tiger Combine and promising anonymity to all subscribers. In The Grapevine, potential clients can look up the right mercenary company for their assignment, or post an ad with a basic outline of the mission, so that subscribed companies can browse the different job offers. To know about The Grapevine, at least one member of a mercenary company must be a 7th level officer, either WarMek or regular military, and subscription is free for mercenaries. Civilians of any level may access The Grapevine, but they must pay a great deal of money for their subscription, thus limiting the subscription to clients who can afford to pay a mercenary team.

## Mercenary Clients

It is not rare for a mercenary company to subcontract the services of another smaller company, taking the lion's share of the payment and handing out a negotiated fee. The mercenary company client can be a Mek company looking for armoured support, or an armoured division in search of special forces saboteurs to clear anti-armour defences, but all the deals are conducted in friendly rivalry terms, especially if both companies are of the same kind. Companies that conduct themselves poorly when subcontracted by another mercenary company have their name and reputation soiled as word gets around, because the bigger company certainly has more pull in the mercenary market.

## Mercenary Client Sizes

d20	Size	Budget	Assets	Negotiator	Example
1-3	Tiny	x1.2	-1	-1	Small successful mercenary company.
4-7	Small	x1.4	+0	+0	Medium successful or small rich. mercenary company.
8-11	Medium	x1.6	+1	+1	Large successful, medium rich or small very rich mercenary company.
12-15	Large	x1.8	+2	+2	Huge successful, large rich or medium very rich mercenary company.
16-18	Huge	x2	+3	+4	Huge rich or large very rich mercenary company.
19-20	Gargantuan	x2.2	+4	+8	Huge very rich mercenary company.

## Mercenary Client Assets

d20	Repair Facilities	Satellite	Air	Infantry	Armour	Artillery	Transport & Logistics	Intelligence	Computer
1-4	B	C	A	A	A	A	A	A	B
5-8	B	D	B	B	B	B	B	B	C
9-12	C	D	C	C	C	B	C	C	C
13-16	D	E	D	D	D	C	D	D	D
17-20	DD	E	E	E	E	C	D	D	D

Moore Limited Marshall Armoured Personnel Carrier



## Origin

A client's origin will speak volumes about the way he conducts business as well as how much he is willing to pay for the services of a mercenary company, not to mention how he may approach a company whose activities pit them against the client's

own origin (if he cares about such things, of course). Use the country's multiplier to calculate the offer that the client will present on the negotiation table, and remember that, depending on his type and size, he may have a budget twice as high that he is willing to pay.



Origin Table

d100	Country	Multiplier
1-3	Argentina	1.05
4-6	Australia/New Zealand	1.0
7-10	Brazil	1.15
11-13	Canada	1.05
14-18	China	.95
19-21	Colombia	1.25
22-26	Congo	.8
27-29	Egypt	.85
30-31	European Federation	1.1
32-34	India	1.0
35-36	Hashemite Arabia	1.3
37-38	Israel	0.85
39-40	Japan	1.05
41-44	Kaliningrad	1.2
45-48	Kazakhstan	0.9
49-53	Kenya	1.1
54-56	Korea	0.9
57-60	Mexico	0.75
61-64	Nigeria	1.25
65-67	Nordic League	1.05
68-70	Persia	1.0
71-73	Russia	0.9
74-77	South Africa	0.95
78-80	Southeast Asia Economic Community	1.0
81-82	Switzerland	1.2
83-85	Taiwan	0.9
86-87	Turkey	1.0
88-91	United Kingdom	1.0
92-95	United States	1.2
96-97	Vatican City State	***
98-100	Venezuela	0.9

## Ulterior Motive

In a perfect world, clients hire mercenaries for straightforward jobs and the mercenaries comply with their contract, receive their payment and everyone walks out happy. The world of 2089 is far from perfect. Clients seeking the services of mercenaries usually have something up their sleeve, else they would try to solve their problems in a less explosive way; this ulterior motive can go from a simple side effect that does not affect the company to outright betrayal, when the client does not expect – nor wish – the mercenaries to survive the mission.

As an ulterior motive is part and parcel of a more complex story, you can determine whether there is one rather than roll randomly, although generating an unexpected ulterior motive can spark a new and surprising direction in the campaign. Ulterior motives can be uncovered by the mercenary company during the fact-finding step in Part Two of the negotiation process. Each ulterior motive increases the DC of the mercenaries' Gather Information check in addition to the normal +5 such DC has over the assignment's complexity (see the Mission Details section for more on mission complexity).

**Face Value:** This result means that the proposal the client puts on the table is all there is to the assignment. All complications and terms have been laid out on the table and, as difficult as a mission can be, the company will not encounter unpleasant surprises, at least not those foreseen by the client.

**Minor Complication:** There is a little complication in the assignment that the client is not mentioning in the proposal. Either decide beforehand or roll on the Complications Table below. Most of the complications are similar to the ones already appearing in the main rulebook, but with their effects lessened, as their price increase, listed in the table alongside the complication. Should the company

discover the complication, they can raise the base offer accordingly.

**Duplicity:** The client is hiding something that may affect the company. It may be his real identity, a realistic assessment of the time to completion, or some other detail that may not hinder the company severely.

**Secondary Objective:** The assignment offered to the mercenaries is merely a play in a larger game, and its completion will provoke a result that will yield greater benefits for the client. If the company discovers this unspoken consequence on the success of their mission, they can raise the base cost by up to 10%-15%, depending on the results. An example of this is the destruction of

an agricultural field that will raise the stock prices of the produce cultivated in that field.

**Catch:** The client is willing to offer up to 10% over the standard base offer for the mission he is hiring the mercenaries for. The deal is too sweet and has a catch. Select one complication and increase its effects. The complication is already mentioned in the base offer, but it has other ramifications that will test the mercenaries' moral fibre or their willingness to go to extremes.

**Major Complication:** The client is actively hiding a complication that is part of the assignment but does not appear in the proposal. Either decide beforehand or roll

on the Complications Table below. Should the company discover the complication, they can raise the base offer accordingly.

**Framed!** The client has it in for the mercenaries. The mission has illegal overtones that the client may or may not hide (hiding it merely adds icing to the cake, but if the company discovers it they may not wish to continue looking for the framing) and, once the mercenaries complete it, they will be facing strong local opposition and be blamed for the crime, all ties to the client having been severed and all evidence of their dealings erased.

**Betrayal:** The client does not want the mercenaries to survive, or he does not intend to pay them upon the mission's accomplishment. He may hide complications about the opposition the mercenaries are likely to find, or the mission is really a trap intended to hurt the company. With a mild betrayal, the company may return to find that the client does not exist and has swindled them nice and good, while a major betrayal could mean a serious chance of dying under unexpected enemy fire.



### Ulterior Motive Table

d20	Ulterior motive	DC modifier
1-4	Face value	+0
5-7	Minor complication (roll in table)	+1
8-9	Duplicity	+1
10-11	Secondary objective	+2
12-13	Catch	+2
14-15	Major complication (roll in table)	+2
16-17	Framed!	+3
18	Betrayal, mild	+3
19	Betrayal, moderate	+4
20	Betrayal, major	+5

### Complications Table

d20	Minor complication	Major complication
1-3	<i>Aerial support:</i> The enemy has 1/8 the unit's net worth or more in aerospace assets and they may be a factor in the mission. +2,500	<i>Aerial support:</i> As the main rulebook.
4-5	<i>Blackout:</i> There is a 15% chance that any communication may be intercepted by enemy surveillance. +4,000	<i>Blackout:</i> As the main rulebook.
6-8	<i>Comms jamming:</i> +1 circumstance penalty on communications. +2,000	<i>Comms jamming:</i> As the main rulebook.
9-10	<i>Unexpected collaterals:</i> Civilians are in the middle of the fire zone. +7,500	<i>Extreme prejudice:</i> As the main rulebook.
11-13	<i>Difficult evac:</i> There is a 50% chance that extraction is intercepted upon completing the mission. +6,500.	<i>Impossible evac:</i> As the main rulebook.
14-15	<i>War zone:</i> The unit may see action a couple of times before completing the mission. +10,000	<i>Kill zone:</i> As the main rulebook.
16-17	<i>Patrols:</i> The area around the target is heavily patrolled; careful recon and manoeuvring required. +3,000	<i>Monitoring post:</i> As the main rulebook.
18	<i>Nuclear potential:</i> There is a plausible chance that the mission area may be subject to a nuclear bombardment during the course of the assignment. +25,000	<i>Nuclear potential:</i> As the main rulebook.
19-20	<i>Stationary hazard:</i> The area has inconveniencing terrain or manufactured threats that may delay their progress.	<i>Stationary danger:</i> As the main rulebook.

## The Negotiator

Every client has a negotiator who presents the proposal on the table. Tiny clients may represent themselves, but larger patrons have an expert in brokering deals and dealing with mercenaries, so the company may be in for a tough encounter when dealing with a shrewd negotiator. It is this negotiator who makes the Bluff and Diplomacy checks on the client's behalf.

Unless the negotiator will be a recurrent character in a campaign, he does not need to be fully fleshed out; the only information you need for playing him in the negotiation is to know his average level, their Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma scores, and his Bluff, Diplomacy and Sense Motive ranks. Choose a negotiator from the table or roll randomly, applying the negotiator modifier for the client's type and size. The skill bonuses in the table already include their corresponding ability modifiers.



## The Deal

Once the characteristics of the client and its representative have been determined either arbitrarily or randomly, it is time to get the mercenaries to the negotiating table. Choose the mission type and the overt complications, and then combine them with the client's size and type to create the mission's details, plus any ulterior motive from the part of the

client. Create some quick notes about the negotiator, his personality and some outstanding quirks, and have him pay a visit to the mercenaries' offices, or set up a meeting at his own workplace or another neutral location. Finally, get ready to do some haggling, which can be as tough, or tougher than the actual mission. . . oh, and always remember to let the phone ring at least twice.



TAK Industries LAMAST Light Attack Mechanized Assault Tank



## Negotiator Table

d20	Negotiator
1	<i>Incompetent:</i> Civilian or Officer 2; Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12; Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Sense Motive +3.
2-3	<i>Poor:</i> Civilian or Officer 2; Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12; Bluff +5, Diplomacy +5, Sense Motive +5.
4-5	<i>Inexperienced:</i> Civilian or Officer 2; Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 14; Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Sense Motive +6.
6-7	<i>Promising:</i> Civilian or Officer 3; Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 14; Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Sense Motive +7.
8-10	<i>Average:</i> Civilian or Officer 4; Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14; Bluff +9, Diplomacy +12, Sense Motive +9; Skill Focus (diplomacy).
11-13	<i>Canny:</i> Civilian or Officer 4; Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14; Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Sense Motive +9; Skill Focus (diplomacy), Skill Focus (bluff).
14-15	<i>Talented:</i> Civilian or Officer 5; Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15; Bluff +13, Diplomacy +13, Sense Motive +10; Skill Focus (diplomacy), Skill Focus (bluff).
16-17	<i>Experienced:</i> Civilian or Officer 5; Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 16; Bluff +14, Diplomacy +14, Sense Motive +10; Skill Focus (diplomacy), Skill Focus (bluff).
18-19	<i>Shrewd:</i> Civilian or Officer 6; Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 16; Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15, Sense Motive +15; Skill Focus (diplomacy), Skill Focus (bluff), Skill Focus (sense motive).
20	<i>Shark:</i> Civilian 7; Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 16; Bluff +16, Diplomacy +18, Sense Motive +13; Skill Focus (diplomacy), Skill Focus (bluff), Advanced Night School (public speaking).



# Caves of the Magi

A lot of people have asked if we could produce a scenario which can easily be slotted into an ongoing campaign which would not destabilise the campaign itself. Always keen to oblige. . .

John Thompson



## Overview

Caves of the Magi is a short scenario for four level 8-10 characters and is designed to be dropped into just about any d20 adventure. It is easily playable in a single evening. The encounters can be scaled downward quite easily by changing the numbers of the ogres or converting the ogre magi to normal ogres. They can scale † upward by adding more ogre mages or giving the existing ogre mages a number of 'pets' such as hell hounds.

## Linking this module to your adventure

This adventure can be used as a random encounter — while travelling from point A to point B on your quest, your party stumbles upon the caves — or be threaded into your plot in other ways. The possibilities for plot insertion points are limitless but a few might include:

- † Your party has been tasked by the distant members of a dwarf clan to investigate the disappearance of the members of a local dwarven trading post.
- † A local wizard seeks the return of an item stolen from him by a group of ogres; he knows their approximate location. How he rewards the party is up to you; the reward for fetching the item could be a lesser magic item, gold, or perhaps information the party needs to fulfil their main quest, whatever that might be.
- † For evil characters: Slavers have

contacted your party with a deal. Bring the dwarves to an isolated trading outpost and receive a large sum for each one brought back alive. Of course, upon arrival the party will discover the vast majority of the dwarves dead but the opportunity exists to plunder their former home if the characters wish to engage or try to frighten off the ogres.

A pair of half-starved young dwarves emerge from the wilderness with a tale of ogres invading their ancestral home and killing their family. They beg the party to help them seek revenge and regain their stonehome. If this plot insertion is used, the Games Master will need to remove the dwarf twins from encounter Area 5, **The Larder**, below, although the twins will still offer the same useful information to the party.

A local dwarven trading outpost has not been heard from for weeks; local merchants are concerned. Moreover, there have been sightings in the area of not only ogres but their more fearsome and far more dangerous cousins, ogre mages, as well.

† Inside a deserted cavern system outside of town is a powerful magic weapon guarded by hordes of undead. (untrue)

† A band of dwarves is fighting off an incursion by a group of drow raiders in the mountains not far from here. They need your help. (untrue)

## Dramatis Personae

### Harkan FireEye

Harkan is the leader of the ogre gang that has taken over the Foambottom stonehold. It seems Harkan got wind of a rumour that the Foambottoms possessed a magic item that allowed the user to *polymorph* at will, and few creatures desire treasure and magic items as much as ogre mages. Of course, this rumour was totally unfounded and the majority of Clan Foambottom has been killed for naught. Harkan's crew took serious losses on the assault on the stonehome, and its position is by no means secure. Harkan knows this and will bargain with evil characters, offering gold to be allowed to leave the area with his gang if faced with an overwhelmingly powerful force of evil characters. Good characters he will attack on sight. Harkan is no normal ogre mage, as his hit points and challenge rating show. He should prove a tough adversary, especially if some of his fellow ogre mages make it from the ambush site to join him.

### Korl and Snick

#### Foambottom

This pair of dwarf twins, unless used differently as a plot insertion point (see introduction), have been hiding in the **Larder** (Encounter Area #5) for the past three weeks since the sacking of their stonehome, waiting for an opportunity to escape. They



will urge any good- or neutral-aligned party to rid the caves of the ogre invaders; if the party seems reticent they will offer to give them their father's magic circlet, which remains hidden in the master bedroom, **Harkan's Lair**, described below. They will attempt to remain hidden from any party and will only emerge from their 'burrow' once they are convinced the party is of good alignment. How they are convinced is up the Games Master; certainly, having a dwarf in the party talk to them would help, or a character such as a paladin or sorcerer with a high charisma modifier or diplomacy skill.

Once the area has been 'cleansed,' the Foambottom twins will remain at the stonehome and will ask the party to deliver a message to the nearest town. This message will find its way to other members of their clan, who will, in time, arrive to help repopulate the caves. The Games Master can factor in further experience-point gain or side adventures by having the party deliver the message directly to a distant member of Clan Foambottom, at some faraway location.

### The Ogre Mages

The two ogre mages in the main cavern fight as per their descriptions

in *Core Rulebook III*. It is important to note that only acid and fire deal normal damage to an ogre mage; all other damage is nonlethal. Games Masters may want to review *Regeneration* in the Special Qualities section of *Core Rulebook III* before starting this module. See the **Appendix** for complete combat information on the ogre magi.

### Resting

If the party attempts to rest at any point inside the complex before Harkan and his allies have been killed, they will very likely be

ambushed (80% chance) as they try to sleep by whatever ogre mages are left.

## The Caves

### Entranceway

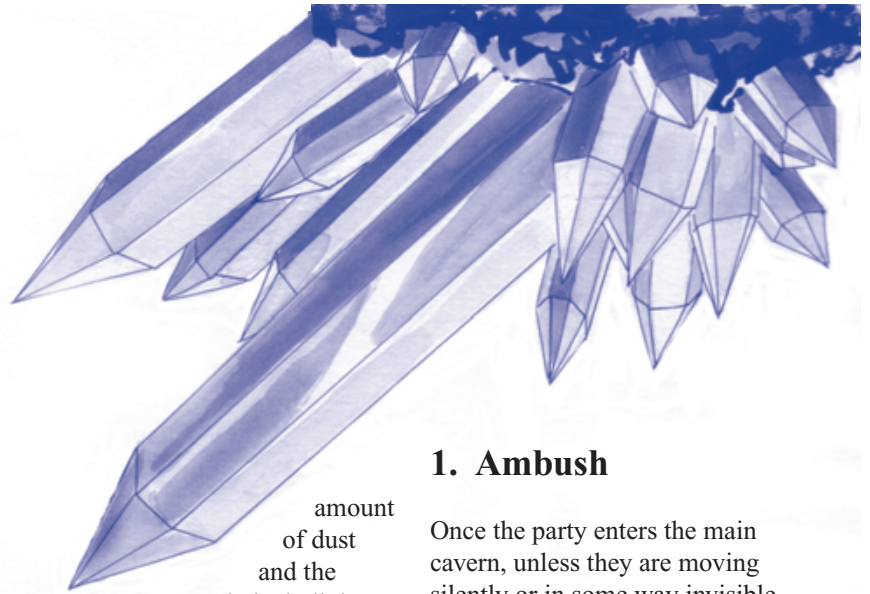
*This rough stone passageway seems to have been recently supported by a series of rough beams and lumber buttressing. This recent support work is obviously of poor quality but seems to be keeping the roof off your heads. The walls themselves are carved from a dull red rock, laced through with veins of what appears to be quartz. Your torchlight flickers off these veins, while the dull rock, in contrast, seems to absorb the light's glow.*

About 30 feet into the passage from the outside is a *fireball* trap which deals 6d6 explosion/fire damage, Reflex save (DC 14) for half. If a successful Spot check (DC 16) is made, the trap can be avoided, or deactivated by a successful Disable Device check (DC 20). Moreover, the fire will further weaken the beams in the passage; after the party leaves the trap area, the ceiling will collapse. Note; the collapsing ceiling is not meant itself as a trap, just as a plot device to force the party to have to exit via the spring. In addition, if the *fireball* trap goes off, the ogre mages at the ambush area below cannot be surprised by the party.

### Main Cavern

*You enter a massive cave; the ceiling is nearly 40 feet high and dotted with small stalactites; you cannot see its far side. A strong, unpleasant, musky smell permeates the air; the sound of running water can be heard to the Northwest. A pair of bracketed torches, one on either side of the passage, lights the area where the tunnel ends and cavern begins.*

This large cave is nearly 200 feet long and almost as wide. Judging from the



amount of dust and the relatively light amounts of refuse and offal, the party can gauge the ogres have probably only been here for a month at the most. Note that the torches make it difficult to sneak into the cavern without being seen by the ogre mages in Area 1, below.

The pool along the eastern wall is full of lukewarm, foetid water used by the ogres as their latrine. The water's smell is masked by the general stench of the ogres' musk, unless a party member bends down and sniffs it directly. Anyone drinking it must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1d4 points of temporary Strength and Constitution loss. The small island is sure to elicit some interest from the characters but has nothing of value on it. The ogres' drinking water supply is the cold, clear creek and spring to the Southwest, which also is the only exit to the outside if the entranceway has been sealed by the fireball trap or ambush below.

The entrance to the **Larder** (Encounter Area #5) in the Northwest corner of the caverns is well hidden, needing a Search or Spot (whichever is higher) check (DC 22) to find. Dwarves may add four to their rolls on this check due to their innate knowledge of rock and stonework.

### 1. Ambush

Once the party enters the main cavern, unless they are moving silently or in some way invisible, the two ogre mages here will turn *invisible*. If alerted by the *fireball* trap in the entranceway, they will already be in one of those two forms, at the Games Master's discretion. One of the magi has a *wand of fireballs* (3 charges left, as a 9<sup>th</sup> level sorcerer), and will use it before he uses any of his innate spells such as his *cone of cold*. The resulting explosion, if anywhere near the entrance to the main cavern, will bring down the entranceway (assuming the *fireball* trap has not already done so) behind the party forcing it to eventually exit through the spring to the Southwest. Anyone dashing forward to meet the ogre mages, or conducting a charge attack, may very well fall into the hidden spiked pit trap marked on the map. A successful Spot check (DC 20) reveals the camouflaged pit. The magi are actually hovering just above the pit trap, using their innate *fly* ability, in an attempt to lure melee fighters into it. Damage is 2d8 piercing, Reflex save (DC 20) for half. It takes 1d4 rounds to climb out, given a successful Climb check (DC 15; armour check penalties apply) per round; failed checks result in falling back into the pit. These recurring falls do not do further damage, they just make the character have to start over at attempting to exit the pit. Once in the pit, the magi will each



blast the trapped character with their innate *cone of cold*.

If the ogre magi drop below half their hit points (either actual or nonlethal damage) they will flee east to Room #4 in an effort to heal and link up with Harkan FireEye. If successful, when encountered with Harkan, they will be back to full strength due to the healing positions in Harkan's possession. They will bypass the locked door to the **Storeroom** by assuming *gaseous form* (if they haven't already done so) and slipping under it.

See the **Appendix** for combat information on the ogre mages.

## 2. The Storeroom

*This room is full of sacks of flour and corn, bags of salt, coils of rope, empty barrels and other mundane trading items. A huge pile of rags is heaped in the Southwest corner; sticking out of this pile is what appears to be a humanoid foot of some kind.*

It seems this is the area where the dwarves kept most of the everyday

items they traded for. Racks along the north wall hold rows of dried fish and meats. If a dwarf in the party makes a Spot check (DC 15) they will notice it is dwarf flesh.

The foot, if pulled out and examined, is that of a dwarf. The pile of rags is empty, but the rotting foot is infested with **blood lice**. Any attempt to investigate the pile or the foot without using a pole or other item begins the infestation of the character(s).

### Blood Lice

Fine Vermin  
CR 4 HD 1/4d8; hp 1; Init +0; Spd 10 ft.; Space/Reach: 1/2 ft./0 ft.; AC 18 (+8 size), touch 18, flat-footed 18; Atks Slam +4 melee; Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-20; SA Burrow; SQ Vermin, tremorsense 20 ft; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 2, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 0, Wis 10, Cha 1

*Burrow (Ex):* Blood lice are swarms of tiny parasitic organisms which inhabit both living and dead creatures. Adult blood lice inhabit the corpses of their former hosts, ready to transfer to a new victim at the first opportunity. Any creature coming into contact with this former host,

whether accidentally or purposefully, becomes infected.

Once infected, the victim only becomes aware of the infestation if they succeed at a Wisdom check (DC 17). On a successful check, the victim notices both massive bleeding under the skin at the area of infection (although, due to their anaesthetic bites, the lice swarm's initial entry into the skin is painless) as well as a disfiguring of the musculature as the swarm moves upward toward the heart.

Blood lice deal 1d10 points of temporary Constitution damage per round; when the victim reaches zero Constitution, he dies. At this point the adult lice, now gorged on the blood of their host, lay eggs in the corpse, which hatch after 1d3 days and feed on the carcass. However, this new brood cannot lay eggs without first feeding on the fresh blood of a new victim, and die within a week if a new host is not procured.

During the first four rounds of infestation, the lice swarm can be killed by opening the skin and applying fire or acid to the swarm or using *remove disease*. After the fourth round, presuming the victim is still alive, the only way to kill the swarm is by using *remove disease*. However, if the victim is cured at any time after the first two rounds, they will suffer 1d3 points of permanent constitution loss, reversible only through a *wish* or *miracle*.

## 3. The Kitchen

*A huge, natural-stone fireplace sits against the west wall. A fire is blazing in it. A chimney system connected to the back of the hearth vents the smoke up through the cavern. The walls are festooned with pots and pans and cooking items on hooks, mostly unused. Cupboards line the walls. A hunk of flesh sits on a spit, untended and burning. The smell of burning flesh is nauseating.*

Again, the flesh is that of one of the former inhabitants of this area. Other than what is described above, this room is otherwise empty.

#### 4. Harkan FireEye's Lair

*This door was obviously made with great care and just as obviously designed to hold back invaders. Made of burnished steel and mounted on thick hinges set directly into the rock, any attempt to kick this door in would surely result only in a broken foot. In contrasting black metal on the face of the door is the seal of the dwarven house that formerly inhabited this place, a cracked shield and notched warhammer.*

The metal door is locked, and needs a successful Disable Device check (DC 25) to open. If the party has successfully discovered the Foambottom twins in the **Larder** (Encounter Area #5) they can deactivate the door's *fireball* trap before opening it.

Inside, once the lock is opened, waits Harkan and any of his comrades who managed to escape the initial ambush attempt. The door is trapped; a successful Search check (DC 30) finds the trap, and a successful Disable Device check (DC 30) deactivates it. If not deactivated, opening the door triggers a 6d6 *fireball*, Reflex save (DC 14) for half.

*As the door swings open, you see awaiting you is the biggest ogre mage any of you has ever seen. His eyes are a gleaming red, in sharp contrast to the ivory white of his fangs. His hatred for you burns hot; it is a palpable force in the room. This will be a fight to the death.*

Harkan and any of his group with him cannot be surprised as long as the *fireball* trap remains in place. They will attack with their *cone of cold*

abilities just as soon as the *fireball* trap has gone off.

For Harkan FireEye's combat information, see the **Appendix**.

*As the sounds of battle finally recede, you have a chance to examine the room. It is richly appointed, with three small beds along the west wall and two larger ones along the south wall. A shattered chest of drawers sits in the Southwest corner, surrounded by a small pile of children's toys. A large oak armoire, its doors torn off, stands forlornly in the Southwest corner. Another natural-stone fireplace, this one obviously designed for warmth rather than for cooking, is embedded into the Northeast wall.*

Hidden in a secret compartment in the armoire is the family's heirloom, still undiscovered by the ogres, a *Circlet of the Blessed Hammer*. The compartment can be discovered through a successful Search check (DC 25).

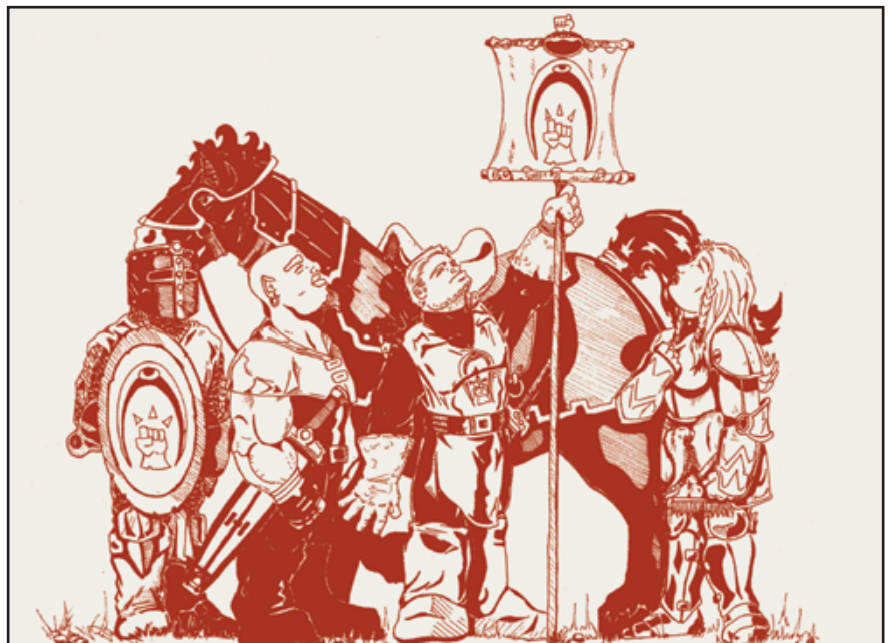
***Circlet of the Blessed Hammer***  
On command, this elaborate golden headband, inset with small gems, allows the wearer to cast *stoneshape*, as a 10<sup>th</sup> level cleric, once per day. The circlet has a market value of 4,000 gp.

#### 5. The Larder

This crevice is not only hard to spot, needing a Search check (DC 22; innate dwarven bonus applies to roll), it is too thin for the ogres to have passed through without *polymorphing* themselves, something which they seem disinclined to do as yet.

*A crevice in the wall of the main cavern leads to this long, thin cave. Lined with wooden shelves, this site is obviously used as a food-storage area for perishables due to the cool, steady temperature underground. Trail rations, water skins and fresh vegetables are well stocked.*

More importantly, a thorough investigation will also reveal a tiny cave, holding two adolescent twin female dwarves, **Snick and Kori Foambottom**. They are the only survivors of the slaughter of their family, and have been living in the larder for the past three weeks, eating the well-preserved vegetables and foodstuffs, not daring to attempt an escape. While obviously (and rightly) terrified of the ogres, they are also bent on regaining their former home. They will warn the party of the trap on the door to Harkan's Lair (a rivet on the door, if depressed, retracts the



activation nub), which negates the ogre's Initiative bonus.

For more on the twins, see the **Dramatis Personae** section at the beginning of the adventure.

The party is free to rest anywhere in the cave complex once the ogres have been eliminated.

## Appendix

### Ogre Mage

#### Large Giant

**Hit Dice:** 5d8+15 (40, 45 hp)

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)

**AC:** 18 (-1 size, +5 natural, +4 chain shirt), touch 9, flat-footed 18

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +3/+12

**Attack:** Greatsword +7 melee (3d6+7/19-20) or longbow +2 ranged (2d6/x3)

**Space/Reach:** 10 ft./10 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Spell-like abilities

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, regeneration 5, spell resistance 19

**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17

**Skills:** Concentration +11, Listen +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +10

**Feats:** Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative

**Environment:** Cold hills

**Level Adjustment:** +7

**Organisation:** Solitary, pair, or troupe (1-2 plus 2-4 ogres)

**Challenge Rating:** 8

**Treasure:** Double standard

**Alignment:** Usually lawful evil

**Advancement:** By character class

Ogres speak Giant, and those specimens who boast Intelligence scores of at least 10 also speak Common.

Ogre mages speak Giant and Common.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will - *darkness* and *invisibility*; 1/day - *charm person*, *cone of cold*, *gaseous form*, *polymorph*

and *sleep*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 9th-level sorcerer (save DC 13 + spell level).

**Flight (Su):** An ogre mage can cease or resume flight as a free action.

While in gaseous form he can fly at normal speed and has perfect manoeuvrability.

**Regeneration (Ex):** Ogre mages take normal damage from fire and acid.

An ogre mage which loses a limb or body part can reattach it by holding the severed member to the stump.

Reattachment takes 1 minute. If the head or other vital organ is severed, it must be reattached within 10 minutes or the creature dies. Ogre mages cannot regrow lost body parts.

**Possessions:** Between the two of them, these two ogre mages have the following —

200 pp

700 gp

Wand of *fireball* (as 9th level SORC), 3 charges (may have been expended in combat)

Scrolls:

- *arcane lock*

- *knock*

- *minor restoration*

Ring of *water breathing*

### Harkan FireEye

As above, but with the following exceptions:

**HP:** 72

**AC:** 20

**Attacks:** Greatsword +9 melee  
All spells and spell-like abilities as 12th, not 9th, level SORC

**CR:** 10

#### Possessions:

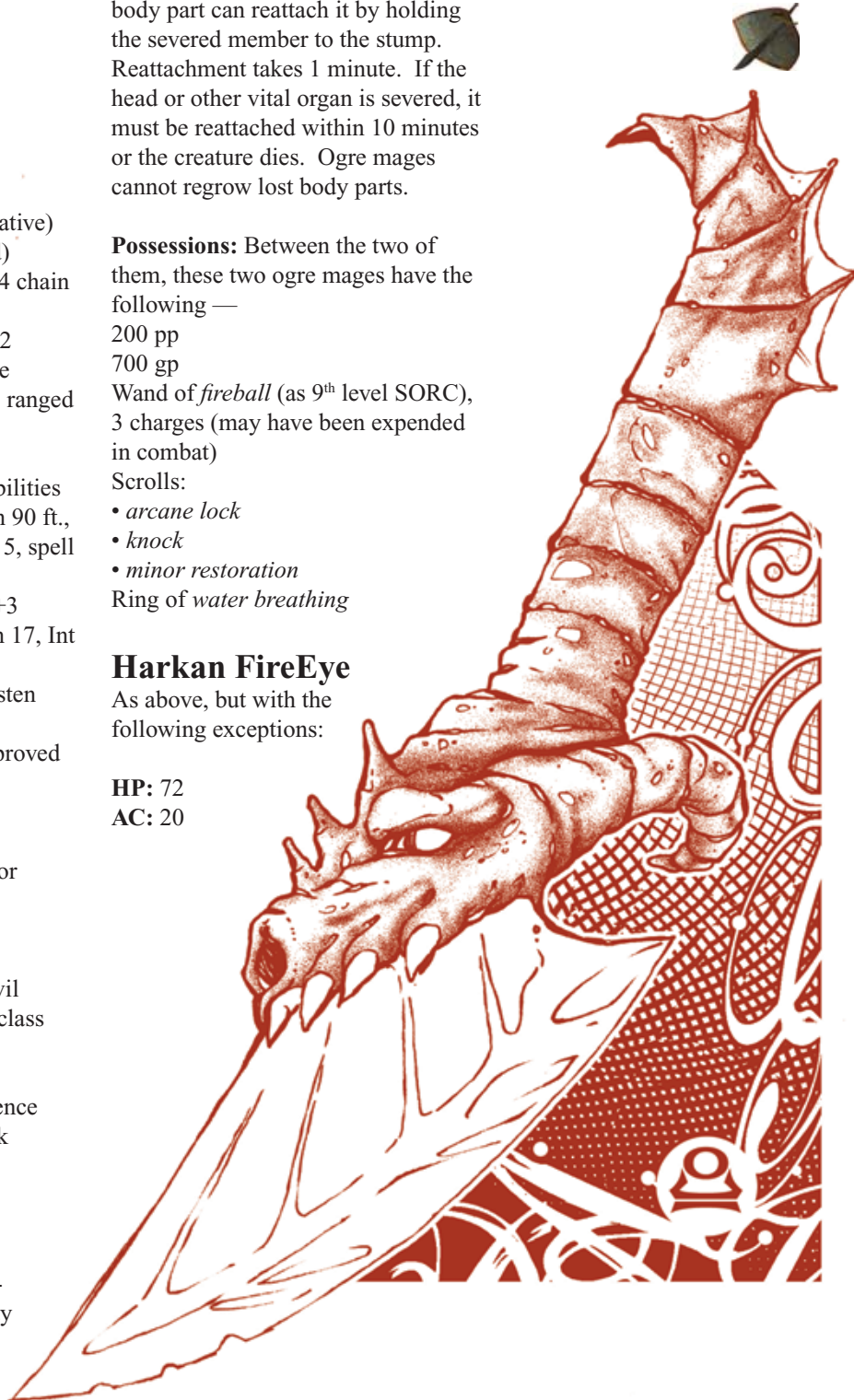
*Bracers of Armour* +2

400 pp

+2 *Greatsword*

scroll: *protection from good*

Three potions of *heal*





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