Signs & Portents

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Roleplayer

Wagon Train To The Stars

Wanderlust In Babylon 5

The Martial Discipline

New Character Class For Conan the RPG!

Murder On The Megaways

First Part Of A Huge Judge Dredd Scenario

Plus. . . Legends of the Northwest, OGL Steampunk Factory Manager,
Tales From Mongoose Hall returns, Jonny Nexus and lots, lots more!

Signs &
Portents

Salutations,

It's a sad time for Signs & Portents Roleplayer this month as we bid farewell to one of our regular columnists – at least for the moment. In our two and a bit years of publication, there has only been one writer who has contributed to every single issue, come rain or shine, high tide or, erm, whatever the other half of that metaphor is, and usually got things in quite close to deadline. I speak, of course, of Jonny Nexus, who is leaving the hallowed halls of Signs & Portents Roleplayer in order to switch off his television set and go and do something less boring instead (or something) *(note to American readers – this is an English telly in-joke and is very funny. Honest).* He's actually leaving so that he can concentrate on his own webzine, Critical Miss (which can be found on the worldinterwidewebnet at the following address: http://www.criticalmiss.com/), which I'm guessing from the name is all about the most crucial fashion choices for the modern young lady (Critical meaning 'good' in modern-type talk and Miss being the diminutive form of Mistress, a title used by unmarried women). Or something. So jolly good luck with that, Mr. Jonny!

I also want to say sorry to the lovely Anne Stokes, who provided the rather splendid artwork for the covers of issue 26 and 29 and well as a lot of the design work, who I keep forgetting to give an art credit to. Sorry, Anne!

See you next month!

Matt

Signs & Portents Roleplayer Contents

Features

Regulars

EYE ON MONGOOSE

Coming This Month
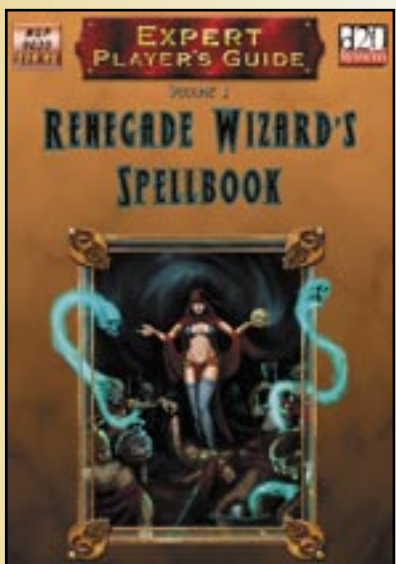
RENEGADE WIZARD'S SPELLBOOK

The first of the Expert Player's Guides, the Renegade Wizard's Spellbook provides 256 hardbound pages jam-packed with variant spellcasting methods and a huge array of arcane spells for the low, low price of just $19.95.

This tome is the perfect companion to other magic compendiums - after all, who wants to play a wizard who only has access to 'standard' spells that everyone else has. With spells and spellcasting rules drawn from the very best of Open Content sources, the Renegade Wizard's Spellbook is your one-stop shop for arcane power!

The Drow War: Book III
The Darkest Hour
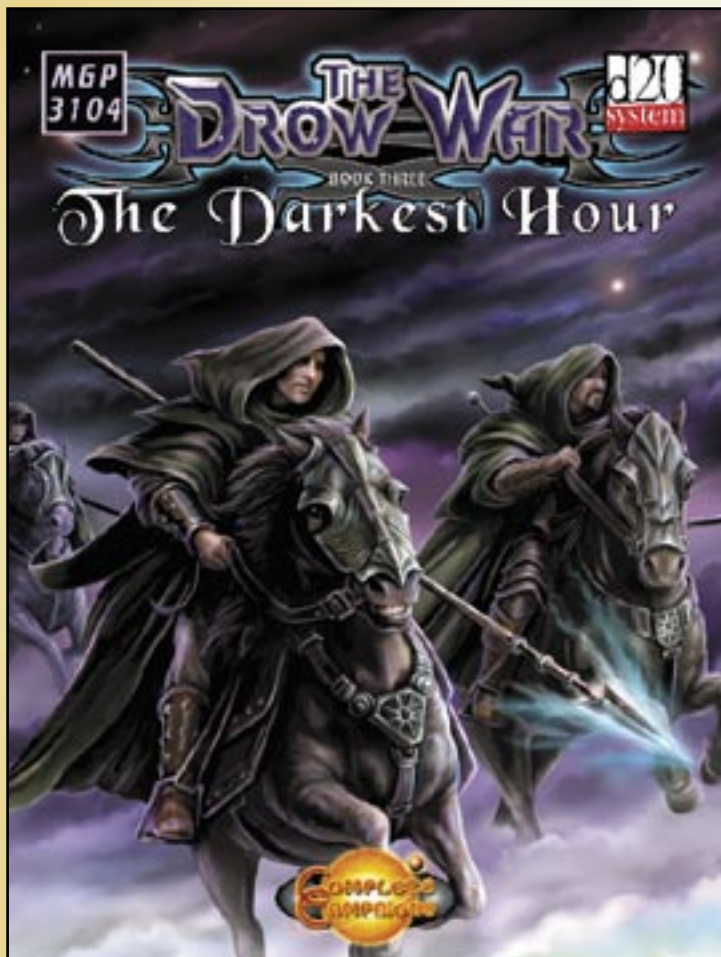
The Drow War: Book III - The Darkest Hour begins on the world of Ashfar, where a peace forged in blood has been bitterly broken. Something is causing the barriers between worlds to collapse, smashing plane into plane, opening rifts through which atrocious fiends can step into the ordinary world and cause chaos. Even former enemies recognise the threat. Is it written in the heavens that the Starborn and the drow must always be opposed or can the dark ones truly change? Can the olive branch be accepted or is this just another trick?

In the haven of a dead god's skull, infernal and heavenly creatures meet to determine the fate of the worlds. Faced with a gathering of strange and sinister individuals from across the planes, the Player Characters must choose their allies well. Can these ancient enemies possibly act together and prevent the coming catastrophe or will the Player Characters stand alone against the Dark? With the debris of shattered worlds serving as incontestable proof that whole planes have already been destroyed, the race is on to find the powers behind it. The dust is blown off old books and legends are ransacked for information. There are at least three items that can work this kind of magic, but which – if any – is the artefact responsible?

The Drow War: Book I - The Gathering Storm saw the Player Characters save nations. *The Drow War: Book II - The Dying of the Light* saw them save the world of Ashfar. Now, in *The Drow War: Book III - The Darkest Hour*; they must save a million worlds. The fate of the cosmos rests in the hands of the Starborn and those they choose to ally with. Only one thing is certain…

Whichever path the future takes, whichever side is victorious, this is the final battle of the Drow War.

The Drow War: Book III - The Darkest Hour is third in a series of three 256-page books. Each one contains a single epic story, all three tie into one overarching saga. The adventures in this book are designed to take the characters concerned from 21st level to 30th level.

Starship Troopers
Arachnid Empire

At last, the secrets of the Arachnid Empire are revealed! This 160 page full colour hardback is packed full of information on the bugs, whether you are a trooper dedicated to saving the Federation or a Games Master looking to terrify your players.

The Arachnid Empire includes a complete update on the universe of Starship Troopers, detailing the Road to Victory campaign, the disastrous Klendathu Invasion and its aftermath. A complete bug colony is mapped out, allowing you to set scenarios and camapigns based around raids into Ararachnid-held territory (cowards need not apply!), and there is a guide to over 30 different sub-species of bug! Added to this is information on Arachnid society, their aims and tactics, and you have a complete guide to Mankind's greatest threat.

PARANOIA - Criminal Histories
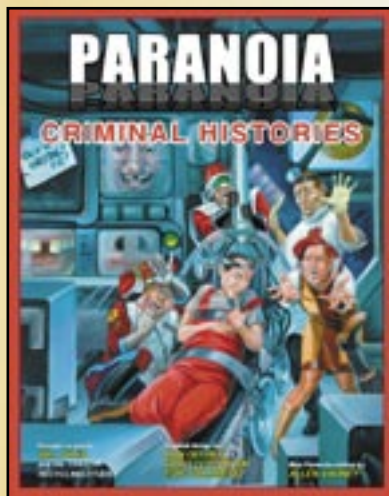
The PARANOIA rulebook's method for creating your Troubleshooter player character (PC) is, of course, perfect. Now your friend The Computer offers an even *more* perfect way to create PCs and the nonplayer characters who know and suspect them. This Criminal Histories rules supplement uses character kits and the amazing *Prehistory Pachinko* lifepath system to load your character with bonus skills and specialties, cool illegal equipment, highly placed contacts and a whole dossier of past accomplishments.

True, some of your accomplishments were treasonous—and your high-clearance contacts may remember how you messed them over—and your teammates can now investigate your background and uncover your traitorous past. But take heart! Investigate them first, and accuse them before they accuse you!

Some early roleplaying games had character creation rules that could kill your PC before the game began. Ha! In *Criminal Histories* your PARANOIA character can die *multiple times* before you go to your first briefing or shoot your first teammate. That's progress!

Babylon 5
Merchants, Traders & Raiders

MGP 3356

d20 SYSTEM

BABYLON 5

Merchants, Traders & Raiders

Written By
Bryan Steele

Babylon 5 Created by J. Michael Straczynski
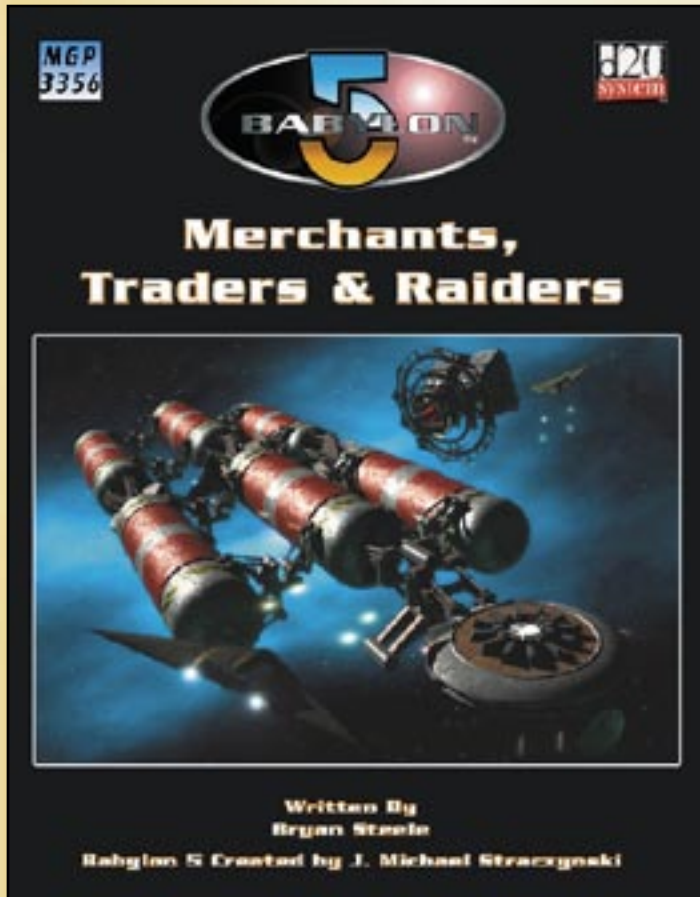
'There is nothing finer than setting eyes on so many tons of spinning metal, thousands of people and miles of electronics held together by millions of credits. It is beautiful.'

The Babylon 5 universe is filled with starship battles and riots that permeate the galaxy. Yet not all plots and schemes are enforced from behind a firing console or powered-up PPG. Most are fought with credits and politics, boycotts and embargoes. Wars of this kind can be fought without a single shot being fired but still crush entire populations in their wake. A merciless master of trading warfare controls thousands, making pawns of all others.

Whether you wish to escort priceless shipments to a safe harbour or attack them for fun and profit, this book is your invaluable key to success! Whether used for plot support or reference material, *Babylon 5: Merchants, Traders & Raiders* embroils Babylon 5 fans in the dangerous world of trade plots and piracy. Some of the facts within these pages are public knowledge – but some are secrets the megacorporations kill to keep...

TALES FROM MONGOOSE HALL

NICK ROBINSON, WITH DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY FROM IAN 'OLD BEAR' BARSTOW

+++SPOILER WARNING+++
The guys at Mongoose Hall are currently playing the epic Drow War campaign; if you don't want to know what happens in that, stop reading now! To be fair they are making such a mess of it though…
+++SPOILER WARNING+++

A new dawn at Mongoose Hall as Ian Belcher starts to run a new campaign and I have been asked to take over from the other Ian [*Don't worry, kids, I'm still around…OB*] in describing the assorted (largely) incompetent meanderings that seem to be the par for Mongoose Hall based adventures. Not that I expect my own contribution to be any more enlightening than anyone else around here, as I am quite capable of out-idioting anyone else.

The campaign started (as far as my character, Hirya Bandiwat, was aware) by falling asleep in a nice warm tropical clime and waking up in a cold stone circle with a bunch of obviously barbaric types (at least to Hirya's eyes). Besides being cold in my thin cotton robes and sandals (with no socks), I was hearing the voice of my not-that-long-deceased mentor telling me that I was somehow connected with these assorted characters and we were destined for great things battling evil, along with something to do with a magical sword. Well Hirya knew battling evil and greatness to be his destiny anyway, so why belabour the point and why did it have to be tied in with these ghastly foreigner types?

Besides the magnificent mage that was Hirya, the group consisted of the paladin brothers Osirus the mighty (and tooled up) warrior (Alex) and his brother Tracius the inordinately clumsy and soon to be very wet (Matt), David had a halfling sorcerer called Pellinor Silverstar and a cat familiar, Grimalkin, Mark's character was Gaulith, the colossus cleric and Ian, Rodric, a bald, surly elf (Baldy). *[This is rich coming from a character whose name is pronounced 'Bleurgh'. I'm actually suspiciously like a certain character played by Vin Diesel – OB.]*

Not only that, but the others were insisting that the voice was their god speaking to them (although in Pellinor's case, it might have been his cat's voice). We had barely begun to recognise each other as allies when suddenly some mist sprite goblin things attacked us with javelins. Osirus and Tracius promptly charged off into the thick fog. Osirus smote two or three of the evil little things whilst Tracius ran straight off the island we were on into the sea, getting very wet. Fortunately (?) the water was not deep and it did set the tone as far as Tracius was concerned. The spirit evil humanoid things were swiftly beaten up and the party could then go off and do more bad things to more Bad Things.

From the island we could see a small village that looked a little run down in the distance. As we

got closer a little run down was wildly inaccurate, as it made the place seem at least a little pleasant. The locals here in this wretched, cold and generally miserable place were moderately informative and we quickly learnt of lost children, ancient heroes and troublesome hobgoblins, and before you could say 'Can't we just go into the inn and start a fight or something' (which I had falsely been led to believe was the Mongoose way of doing things) we were off and meandering. *[Patience my children, for pub fighting will come, I promise – OB.]*

The ancient tomb had been looted and nothing worthwhile had been left behind (we made doubly sure of this). And there had been some sort of fight nearby, which probably for the first and last time we had not been involved in. So we went off into the nearby forests to have a word with the humanoids about missing children. Nothing much happened here as Osirus negotiated a deal with the hobgoblins, most of the party hid and Tracius fell into a pit. Apparently it was the OTHER hobgoblins that we had to deal with, of course. So we did.

Meanwhile Baldy skulked about a bit. *[Another grossly inaccurate representation of the facts. Everybody knows these hobgoblins hate elves and I didn't want to endanger the rest of the party so I stayed watching in the trees, looking at for the missing sprogs – OB.]*

By now Hiryu *[Remember, this should be pronounced Bleurgh or any other favourite noise you have for throwing up – OB]* was both cold and wet as a heavy downpour began and proceeded to make life thoroughly unpleasant. The other hobgoblins were supposed to be hiding out in a long-abandoned nearby mine and after several hours trudging we managed to reach the general vicinity. On discovering a very small hole, the group decided to go fishing, tying Pellinor to a very long piece of rope. Apparently this is called 'scouting ahead', although Hirya would prefer the term halfling

suicide. Safe to say that an urgent tug on the rope indicated that the runt was in trouble and sure enough a battered and bleeding Pellinor was retrieved. Having allowed the hobgoblins to raise the alarm by our cunning tactics we strategically retreated. Or ran away.

In our less-than-dignified flight down a steep hill Tracius fell into a concealed entrance into the hill, an ideal hiding place. Having proved his worth off we went, exploring the passage. At least it was dry (-ish).

After traipsing around in the dark for a while the group came across a winch-driven elevator, which the Paladin brothers were able to raise to our level. There then followed some discussion whereby the Paladins would lower the rest of the party using the winch so they could explore further and rescue the children from whatever fate the hobgoblins had in store for them. Hirya saw a small flaw in the plan – both the front line fighters were not going down with the rest of the party. The somewhat flooded state of the lower tunnels (evident from the top of the elevator shaft) might have dissuaded them both, however the blanket statement 'Paladins don't do climbing' pretty much settled the argument. *[What this translates to is paladins never take off their armour – OB.]* So off went the brave three (Hirya deciding that he was not going anywhere without the front line fighters) marching into danger and as quickly retreating away from it once Baldy had played catch the javelin.

Lessons Learnt:
'Paladins Don't Do Climbing' (although Tracius does do a very good line in falling).

In the subsequent chaos Tracius fell into the shaft and nearly drowned. Pellinor almost saved the day with a well-judged use
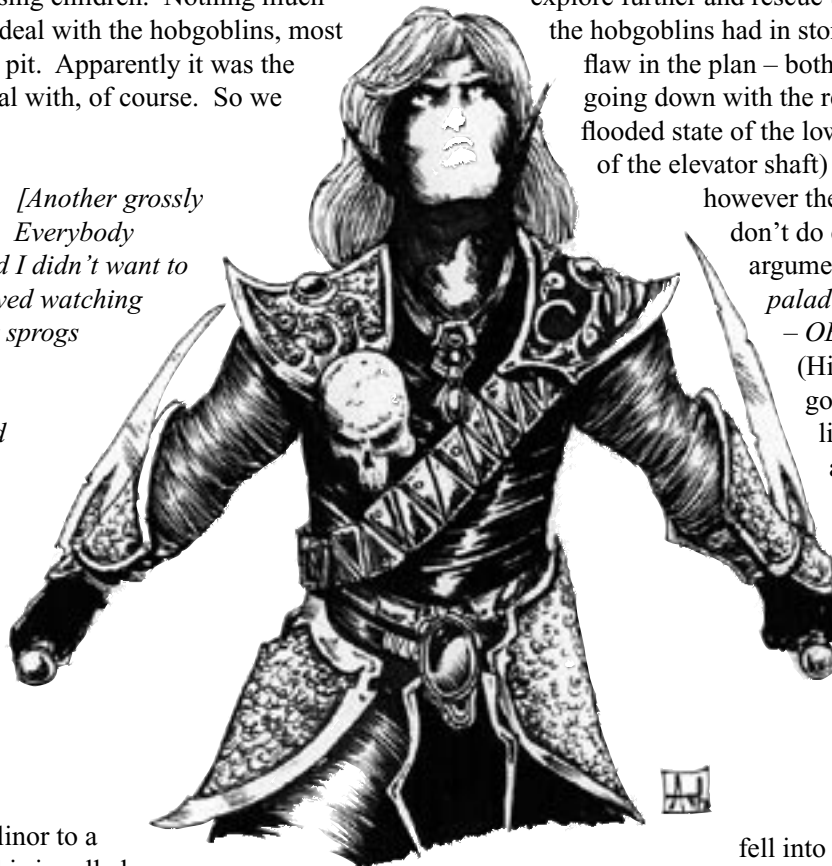
of *colour spray* spells before being bashed unconscious and drowning (joining the floating face down and motionless Gaulith in a sudden feeling of solidarity), his cat provided some entertainment by attacking a hobgoblin whilst balancing on its shield (abjectly failing to do anything worthwhile but getting slammed between said shield and the wall by the irate humanoid). Eventually Osirus, having climbed down the shaft, killed the last hobgoblin and saved his brother from drowning.

Meanwhile Baldy spent most of the fight propped up head just about out the water unconscious. *[Yet distinctly **not** drowned, I would point out – OB.]*

Two dead and two unconscious in our first serious fight of the campaign might be some sort of record, even for the Mongoose crowd. *[Regular readers of this illustrious column will know we can do far better than this if we try! – OB.]* I am afraid to ask to find out for sure in case I get regaled with one of those long winded tales of utter incompetence when gamers try to prove they were in a group more stupidly inept (but not them personally, though) than any you have ever been in. *[See above for evidence of this… OB.]*

Hirya realised on the first little foray against villainy that the party did not recognise his incredible talent for what it was, [*To be fair, walking around in a white sack moaning about not having socks isn't exactly inspiring – OB]* for after shooting away with his crossbow for most of the adventure and then shooting off a *magic missile* the deflating statement 'What the blazes was that? I thought you were just a useless druid!' was uttered. Well not exactly. A couple of words may well have been altered in that statement.

We did find the children shortly afterwards. One of them was quite healthy and quickly freed from some shackles. The body of the second was found by Tracius after he went and fell (again – the fifth time for those keeping score at home) in a flash flood and got separated from the party. We knew it was the other child when Tracius approached the girl and said 'Is this your brother?' whilst dumping the body in front of her.

Lesson Learnt:
Paladins Don't Do Compassion.

We went back to the village with the help of a couple of local dignitaries, the body of the local tax collector we happened to find in the shaft and decided to keep for some reason, the children and a cart to carry the small pile of bodies. Fortunately the stone circle at the start had magical powers and was able to bring back the souls of our departed comrades (but not the child or the well-decomposed tax collector) so they were able to rejoin the party in fairly decent condition.
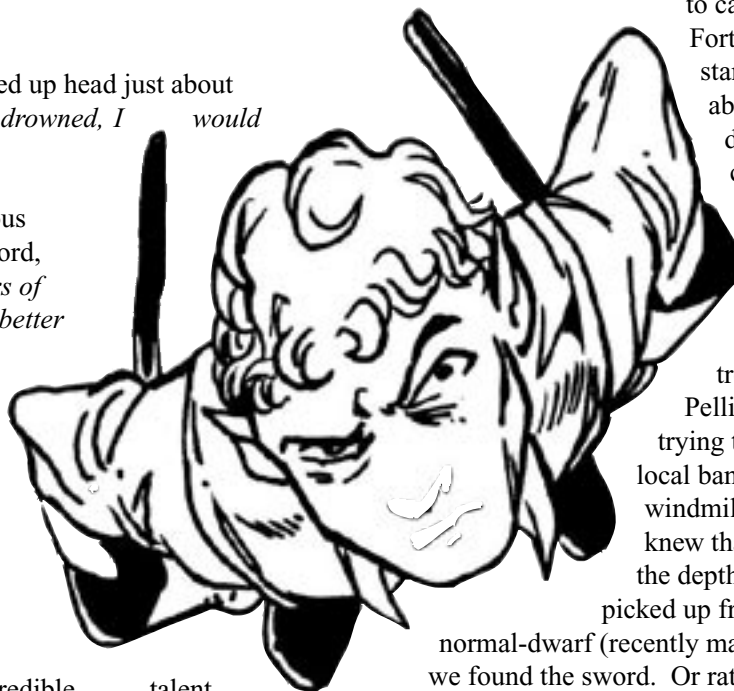
After a couple more little side treks, one of which featured Pellinor doing a swan dive after trying to cast a somatic spell at the local bandits whilst riding the sail of a windmill (yes, you read that right), we knew that an army was coming from the depths thanks to a letter Tracius had picked up from a recently dead larger-than-normal-dwarf (recently made so by Tracius himself). And we found the sword. Or rather Osirus did, which was nice for him.

Meanwhile Baldy spent most of this time in one of the village's hovels recovering from a mighty attack of the dreaded lurgy. *[Bleurgh casually forgets the bit about me going up to the windmill after the fight, finding the missing tax revenue box and giving 800 gold pieces back to the villagers – OB.]*

In the ensuing panic it was decided (somehow) that we would trudge off into the cold and wet countryside down the mud track that passed for a major road in these parts and warn the local city of the soon-to-be-approaching threat from beneath the earth. So off we went.

And Hirya finally gave up and got himself some warm clothes.

Anne Stokes
Artwork & designs

The Drow Wars
Book 2 and 3 cover
artworks.

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Wagon Train to the Stars

COLONISTS IN THE BABYLON 5 UNIVERSE

Christopher Blackmoor

Dissatisfaction with Drudgery

Many races experience wanderlust, the dream to see something new and out of the ordinary. Some want more than this; they want to make the new and extraordinary their home.

The actual stimulus or trigger is different for everyone. It may be the mundane nature of their existence as a wage slave, a corporate drone working in a cubicle for a Martian conglomerate for fifty standard hours per week. It may be the pressures of living environment, such as a run-down area, one threatened by warfare or even intolerance on racial, species or religious grounds. For Humans, the dream of going where no one else has gone and making a home is a dream that many civilisations have had during their histories.

There are many risks involved with attempting to create something new. A sizeable number of citizens in any society consider branching out into something different, but few choose to do it. Those that do are something special; there is no glory involved in colonising a new world, but there is all the freedom a sentient could want. The challenges on a daily basis do not revolve around balance sheets, planetary security or the politics of noble houses. Instead, the failure to meet the requirements of the challenge of colonisation can result in death itself.

Funding an Attempt

Migrating a group of people to another world is neither easy nor cheap. Equipment designed to function in an alien environment and being robust and reliable is not easy on the wallet. Redundant equipment and spare parts for such equipment need to be taken too, as a breakdown without adequate parts can doom a colony. The old nursery rhyme that begins 'for the want of a nail, a shoe was lost' rings especially true for colonists.

The reason of cost is sometimes why colonisation missions are attempted by religious factions; these organisations have a group of financial contributors by default, and establishing a colony with a religious leaning is sometimes seen as a noble endeavour. Corporate sponsorship is also relatively common, although the prospective colonists tend to remain employees of the company rather than the free spirits they may wish to be.

It should also be established at this early stage whether there is to be one colony ship going, or several in the case of a larger colonisation attempt. Multiple ships increase the likelihood of overall success, but the cost for this can become prohibitive very quickly.

Governmental Interventions

Another problem facing a colonising attempt will be the galactic powers concerned. Even if the destination world is unclaimed by any race, governments are unlikely to allow paying taxpayers to abscond without exerting some form of control or influence. A government will need to know which citizens are departing, what happens to their financial obligations and what their intentions are. Whilst this may seen as common sense, the government will need to have details of the departure of the citizens for their records, as well as ensuring that the colonisation attempt will not be acting contrary to the wishes of Earth.

Various permits and licences will undoubtedly need to be purchased; the Earth Alliance is quite strict in this regard, being largely paranoid about colonisation attempts causing political difficulties with other governments. The Earth-Minbari war and the misunderstanding that caused it may now be little more than a bitter memory, but it is still a relatively fresh one. The governments do have valid concerns in many regards; with many colonists being families, a level of expected care will need to be delivered to the youngsters, as well as demonstrating how any educational needs will be met. One requirement is that all colonies have an emergency beacon, to send out a signal in case of a catastrophic failure, although whether a potential rescuer is in range to hear it is another matter entirely.

During the Clarke era, only a handful of permits were issued, such was the paranoia of the government at that time. It is also easier to control a contained populace than a roaming one.

Planning Against Disaster

The rush for the dream has to be balanced against a space-cold practicality; when an expedition has entered the atmosphere of a target planet there is no opportunity for going back. Therefore, any risk or concerns are, in theory at least, brought out at this stage rather than being handled on an alien world with no resources and possibly no means of communication.

Trial runs are not uncommon in the days, weeks and months before launch. Very often, the first few hours of a colonisation attempt are planned down to the second. The colonists cannot stay cooped up on board their landing craft forever, and the sooner an effective location can be established on the planet's surface for them to move into (and begin work) the better.

Corporate (and indeed other) backers will often request a full plan of the colonisation attempt; whilst this may be seen by some as killing the dream, it is to make sure that the dream does not kill them.

What You Leave Behind

The load out for a colonisation expedition is the most crucial element of the whole process, even above some of the environmental concerns on the target world. The colony has to be totally self-sufficient, and what cannot be taken with them or manufactured on-site the colony will have to do without.

A common load-out includes a set of weapons. Earth Alliance recommendation state that shock sticks should be taken to assist in deterring predators, as well as PPG's. A limitation is that additional caps for these weapons are *not* allowed to be taken, to hopefully ensure that these weapons are only used for defensive purposes.

The following equipment load-out represents the bare minimum of equipment that should be taken on a colonisation effort. This list only includes what is required to create the colony; what is required to get the colony site physically established in its first few formative hours. The list of additional items to allow the colony to survive on a day-to-day basis, such as seeds, fertilisers, oils, household utensils, greenhouse lamps and even rudimentary textiles to create clothes could be many times longer than this list.

Item	Quantity
Tempera Component Dome	2
Sealed Colonists' Tents	2
Energy Pods	6
Breather Masks	46
Bedrolls	50
Blankets	50
First Aid Kits	120
Meal Bars (as emergency rations)	300
Toolkits (Electronic, Engineering, Mechanical)	3, 3, 3
Flashlights	10
Cold Weather Clothing	10
Environment Suits	6
W&G Model 10 PPG's	6
Shock Sticks	3

Reaching for the Stars

With the will to find something better, a vessel is required to transport the would-be colonists to their new home. Sometimes, those who want something new travel the stars until they find somewhere to their liking are simply hitchhikers or travellers without funds or means to support themselves. The vast majority of these end up as lurkers on Earth Alliance bases and stations, such as Babylon 5. There, dreams of a new start can become nothing more than a helter-skelter down into the lower levels of society.

For those who have planned a colonisation attempt properly, the ship that will carry them must be correctly fitted out to give them the best possible chance for a fresh start in what will be an alien environment. The following vessel is an example of a ship used for colonisation efforts.

The Demeter

The Mitchell-Hyundine 'Demeter' class explorer vessel is something of a misnomer in terms. Whilst the name explorer may conjure images of visiting far off domains, the real purpose of the Demeter is to allow the initial colonisation of new worlds. The usage of such a craft was curtailed at various points in Earth Alliance history, particularly during the troubled times of the Earth-Minbari War and the Earth Civil War. It achieved respectable sales, but nothing particularly noteworthy. Some Demeters were refitted as personal transports and courier vessels, some conversions faring better than others.

As of 2267, the Demeter still had not managed to break into the military market, despite Mitchell-Hyundine's extensive military contacts going back decades. The chances are that when active exploration is resumed with vigour after the (hopeful) discovery of a cure for the Drakh Plague, a modified version of the Demeter could become standard on 'Explorer' class vessels. An alternate configuration of the Demeter could function as a mobile scientific research station.

Demeter Mission Profile

Like most vessels of its size, the Demeter does not have a jump-engine. The preferred method of operation is for the Demeter to be used in a system that has recently had a jump-gate constructed, or more commonly deployed through a jump-point created by a larger vessel. Once this has taken place, the Demeter will approach the target planet and begin cursory scans. Probes will be launched, and after a period of several hours, wherein these probes will have had a chance to provide environmental data, the Demeter will land and begin deployment as the first part in a process of colonisation.

The second phase of the Demeter's standard profile is to support the ground activities in a new colony. As soon as the craft touches down, it is standard practice for any colonists experienced in military or police matters to scout the immediate area, which should have been successfully identified from orbit. Should the area be secured successfully (with the aid of static firepower provided by the Demeter's turret emplacement), the set-up of a base camp can begin.

No Room in the Wagon

The Demeter can contain nine four man tents which, despite being insured against the elements, are not hermetically sealed, or six four man tents with their own airlock and air supply. The Demeter contains emergency breather masks for all occupants, in case of an atmospheric breach or failure, clearly though these only store a small supply of air, lasting maybe a couple of hours.

In place of three regular tents or two environmentally sealed tents, the Demeter can carry the framework for a medium-sized dome. These structures, provided in component form, will create a sealed structure around twenty meters across, and be ready to put to any use that the colonists in their planning will have deemed appropriate. Due to the bulk, no more than two domes can be carried, even if there is enough weight capacity free for the Demeter to carry another.

Whilst the Demeter mostly carries colonists, for larger colonisation efforts the innards can be stripped out to carry vehicles. In this configuration, the Demeter can carry a Crawler, as detailed in the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game and Fact Book*, which is perfect for exploring the surface of a new world. If this done, a Demeter can carry no other cargo. The crews of such a vehicle often live sleep and work on their craft, so they do not provide an unnecessary burden on their fellow colonists.

DEMETER GAME STATISTICS

Demeter Explorer class Transporter
Statistics: Colossal Spacecraft; hp 350; DV 8 (-8 size, +6 agility); DR 8; Spd 45; Acc 3; Dec 3; Han +2; Sensor +3; Stealth 10; SQ Atmospheric Capable, Long Ranged; Cargo 27,000 lbs; 1 Officer, 2 Pilots; 1 Sensor Operator; 2 Crewmen; 40 colonists.

Weapons:
One Twin-Linked Light Uni-Pulse Cannon; Turret; Attack +2 (targeting computer); Damage 2d8; Critical 19-20; Range 1; Rapid Fire

Colonising the Frontier

The Foundation Stone

The choice of landing location and the colony site on the new world is vital to any colonisation effort. The stability of the fledgling site from a geological point of view is paramount as, obviously, ground movements or other activity can wreck structures. Essential resources such as a supply of water (or something that can be refined into water) must also be close by – even if the water source is mixed with some other chemical or is in a frozen state. The weather conditions of the surrounding area, such as atmospheric pressure, need to be considered, so a period of observation in orbit may be required to estimate the effect that this may have on a prospective colony.

In the first few hours after touchdown, security personnel (or at very least those who know one end of a PPG from the other) secure the immediate area. When this is done, tents and other prefabricated structures can be assembled, depending on the types carried on board their transport by the colonists. With temporary accommodation established, the construction of utility tents or more permanent domed buildings will normally follow. At all times, the co-ordination point of all colony operations will be the transport (such as the Demeter), normally located only a short distance from the base camp.

A Home Away From Home

Surface domes are an excellent choice for a semi-permanent habitant on a world, before terraforming is to be attempted. Drilling down into the ground to create underground cities is one option, as there would be an instant advantage in that the colonists could be protected from the elements. However for new settlements this is not practical, as extensive drilling equipment would need to be carried in by the colonists. Domes, on the other hand, are largely hollow spaces inside, and can be constructed from much smaller components.

The only time that domes are not suitable constructs are where there is a high level of environmental factors that would literally pass through the shell of the dome to affect the inhabitants. One of the most common examples of this would be a high level of background radiation. In this case, an underground settlement may be the only option, but then as well as the previously noted concerns over drilling equipment there is a risk of tectonic activity or even simple cave-ins threatening the settlers.
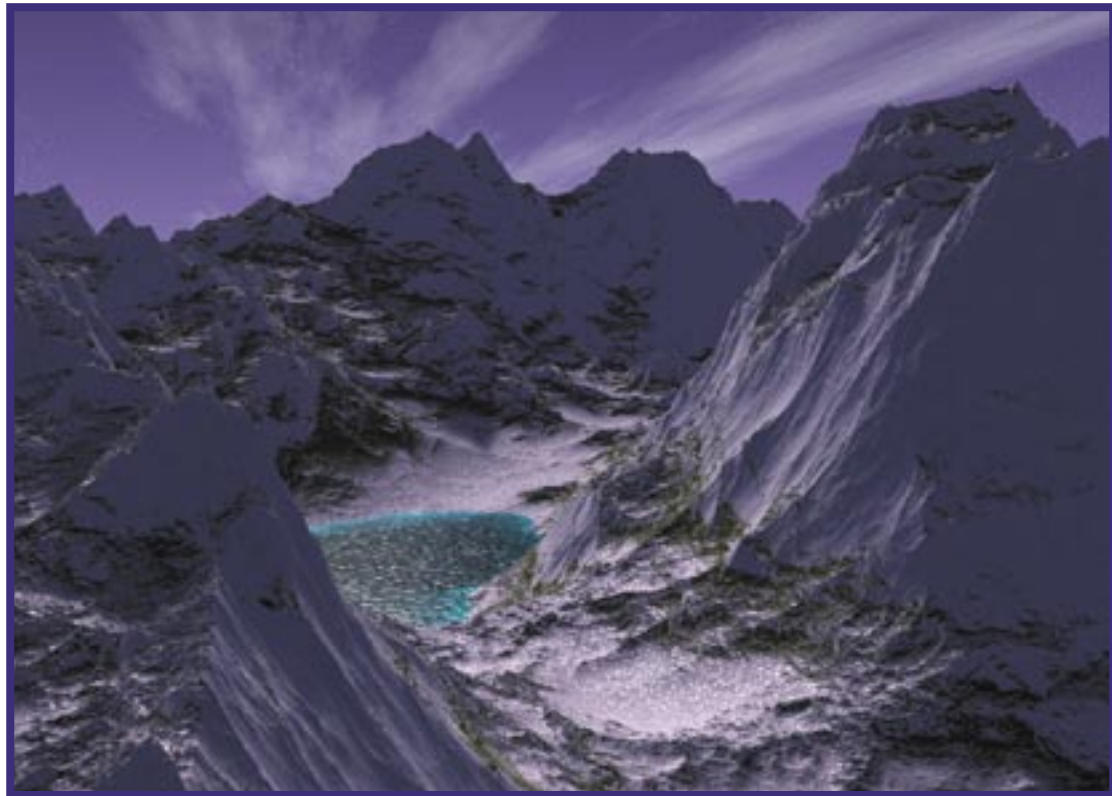
The lessons learned on Mars and the Moon put humanity in good stead to colonise other worlds. The compatibility of Proxima to supporting Earth-originating life of most types could have made humanity a little lazy, but there were many other worlds that were much harsher environments that kept colonisation practices and technologies on their toes.

The Demands on Power

Even if the landing site is a veritable paradise, there will always be power requirements for the fledgling colony. Power can provide light and warmth as well as provide energy for important machinery, such as atmospheric recyclers, electric fences or cordons to discourage predators and even sundry tasks like the cooking of food.

There are three main choices of power to supply the colonists. Nuclear power may be the most obvious choice, as a small reactor could be transported to the world to be used as a central power source. However, it may be that fuel runs out or the reactor goes-off line, and so often a secondary power source is used. Disposal of hazardous material may also be a concern.

Solar power and wind power are two readily available options. Several manufacturers in Earth space build pre-constructed arrays of solar panels or wind turbines than be unfurled and deployed in just a few standard hours. Of course, the dependency on sufficient sunlight or wind power goes without saying, although it will be rare for a location to contain neither adequate sunlight *nor* atmospheric movements suitable to generate power (indeed, such a barren place would almost certainly be rejected as a potential colony site anyway). An alternative sometimes used is thermal power, where there are strong water movements hot under pressure, such as geysers. Energy pods, as detailed in the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game and Fact Book*, are almost always used as perfectly good backups should the primary power array or system fail.

Sustaining for Growth

The ability to grow crops depends on the environment in which the colonisation effort is to be implemented. Crops also need water and specific nutrients in the soil. The availability of these elements may have implications on what can be transported to a new world and grown. It may be that for several decades that no crops can actually be grown on a world, until the soil has been suitably treated and enriched. A failed harvest could spell disaster for a colony out of contact with the rest of the galaxy.

Also important to the growing of crops are the world's proximity to its local star, as well as intervening conditions (such as cloud cover). Where this is not possible, special lamps can simulate the effects of sunlight, although some claim that food grown under a natural sun tastes better.

Livestock is very difficult to transport without even considering the hassle of zero gravity. Races without gravitic drive engines would struggle to keep cattle restrained and in some semblance of sanity during spaceflight followed by a landing on a planetoid below. As with colonists, livestock have their own food, water and environmental requirements, but are a source of milk. A rampaging or loose animal in a planetary dome is literally asking for disaster. For those colonies where the beasts can be kept outside, this is less of an issue.

The Deadliest of Killers

Predators can hound a new colony into extinction. A sharp eye and a PPG are essential in keeping predators at bay; even inside a domed environment, caution is the key. The risk to this is that unwarranted excess caution is often only a few steps away from unqualified paranoia.

There may be an unintentional situation where a world targeted for a colonisation attempt is already home to an indigenous species. This is a potentially disastrous situation for the colonists, as the chances are that their spacecraft will have no means to leave the system without the presence of a jump-gate or another vessel creating a jump-point. Diplomacy is the best course of advised action in this case, although how one goes about engaging in non-threatening dialogue with a wholly alien species will surely prove a nearly insurmountable challenge.

Bacteria are perhaps the greatest threat to a new civilisation in a hostile environment. Rogue bacteria are invisible to the naked eye and able to strike a host down infirm or dead in a million different ways. The loss of a medicine cabinet or the colonists being struck down by a malady with no available treatments has been the death knell of more than one colonisation attempt. Therefore, antibiotics and anti-viral medication amongst others are essential and guarded as tightly as weapons are.

Terraforming – The Pipe Dream

The truth to Earth Alliance citizens creating the dream of a better life is that the world that they have landed on will not be terraformed in their lifetimes. Only the Minbari, and perhaps the Centauri, have the necessary abilities and technological know-how to make that a reality. Whether there is a will behind that is a different matter, as there is a considerable cost implication. For most colonists, the pipe dream of basking beneath alien skies on a terraformed world is just a dream, but not bad as dreams go.

Using Colonists in the Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game

Characters and Choices

The settlers on Theta 49, as detailed in *Crusade*, are a perfect example of colonists within the Babylon 5 universe. Although their origins as genetically enhanced soldiers stand them apart from their kin, the goals they have are the same as any colonist. A chance for a fresh start along with the reward for hard work being a good night's sleep are just some of the benefits a colonist may dream of when stranded in a day to day job in some office block back on Earth.

Good character classes for colonists include Workers and Lurkers. They have practical skills in abundance, essential for any tasks that come up. A character with levels in the Diplomat or Officer class may bring benefit to a group of colonists, helping them to work together. Individuals obsessed with glory hunting find quickly that there is little acclamation in colonising a new world, but there are elements of satisfaction for a job well done. A group of colonists can benefit from a scientist's skills, ensuring that any accidents or illnesses can be dealt with if he is medically proficient. Even if this is not the case, a basic scientific knowledge can always reap rewards.

Of course, there is nothing to say that the colonisation of a world will be easy in the timeframe of the Babylon 5 series. After all, there is nothing to say that a seemingly uninhabited world is actually devoid of life, or that the world was not home to darker powers a thousand years before…

Colonists Equipment

The following equipment supplements the list of equipment provided in the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game and Fact Book*, containing additional items that prove invaluable for any small to medium scale colonisation effort. These pieces of equipment are primarily concerned with shielding colonists from the elements, and allowing them to survive and prosper in a new and probably hostile environment.

Mobile Filtration Device: Roughly the size of a Starfury's engine nacelle, mobile filtration devices allow for impurities to be removed from a water supply. It is able to handle liquids that contain elements of H20, and possesses a rudimentary heating filament to melt ice. The mobile filtration device can extract the majority of harmful elements from a water supply. It is recommended that a scientific analysis of filtered water be carried out on water passed through a filtration device to ensure that no harmful minerals, chemicals or bacteria exist. The filters and innards of this device must be cleaned every 48 hours of use, and thus keeping the unit in well-maintained condition is essential.

Standard Colonists' Tent: Constructed of high quality polymers, the standard tent does not protect those inside from the atmosphere outside or any biological organisms. Nevertheless, it is cheap, and special reflective fibres within the polymer tend to keep heat both out and inside, ensuring a standard level of comfort inside whether it is mildly hot or cold outside. It has room for four occupants, kept in relative comfort. Being inside a tent confers a +4 equipment bonus to Fortitude saves to resist the environments.

Sealed Colonists' Tent: Large and somewhat unwieldy, the sealed tent is actually able to isolate those inside away from their surrounding environments. It can block out any airborne contagion or gas, ensuring that the tent's occupants are kept safe. Like the standard tent, it ensures that temperatures are kept moderately stable; conferring a +4 equipment bonus to Fortitude saves to resist the effects of heat and cold. Unless punctured, the sealed tent can protect the occupants against minimal atmospheres or even vacuum outside of the tent. It has room for four occupants, but without as much free space as in a standard tent. The airlock in the tent has a small oxygen tank to enable eighteen transfers of occupants in and out, and can cater transferring two individuals in environment suits at any one time. Understandably, this tent is much more expensive than the Standard Tent.

Solar Energy Station: One of the most common power generation solutions taken by colonists, a solar energy station is a cost effective unit and relatively hard to damage. The station has energy banks capable of supplying 48 hours worth of power after 24 hours charging in sunlit conditions. One of these can provide all of the energy requirements for a single Tempera Component Dome with a moderate power requirement.

Tempera Component Dome: The dome comes in component parts, with a sealed airlock. It is constructed from a set of meshed hexagonal templates that link together to form the shell of the dome. A semi-transparent flexible polymer is contained within each template, ensuring that any available sunlight can enter the dome. As part of the unique design, an electrical current passed through the polymer changes its translucent properties, turning the polymer dark brown for several hours. On worlds with especially long days, a dome can pass this current through the polymer segments to simulate a longer nighttime. In the situation of a tear, a small liquid polymer release tank will release a quick drying compound that will permanently flood the hexagonal section breached, sealing any puncture. The dome has an airlock to allow access to and from the outside, and access points for the supply of an air supply, water and energy from external sources. When constructed, a dome is twenty metres across, and six metres high at its peak. This surprising internal capacity means that the dome can contain additional structures, or even function as a nursery for the growing of plants.

Wind Energy Station: In situations where sunlight is limited, either by atmospheric conditions or distance from the local star, alternate sources of power can be used. A Wind Energy Station is large and bulky, but when erected consists of two separate large wind turbines that can be deployed in under an hour. When properly secured, one of these stations can provide energy for two Tempera Component Domes, or one such dome with a high power requirement.

Item	Cost	Weight
Mobile Filtration Device	4,500	150 lb.
Standard Colonists' Tent	700	120 lb.
Sealed Colonists' Tent	2,200	500 lb.
Solar Energy Station	1,200	275 lb.
Tempera Component Dome	35,000	7,000 lb. (can be split)
Wind Energy Station	3,500	1,200 lb.

Adventure Hooks

⛨ Interstellar Benevolence, a charitable group based on Proxima, has agreed to fund a colonisation attempt by a group of homeowners who suffered lost their dwellings in a catastrophe of the Games Master's choosing. Three Demeters have been provided to bring the colonists and equipment down to the surface to give them the best possible start. However, no sooner has the landing craft touched down, domes erected and the colonists moved in than a scouting expedition conducted in the surrounding area reveals a strange alien artefact, almost like a tombstone or monolith, that began pulsing when the first scout approached. The implications on the fledgling colony could be dire, especially if this artefact has revealed the presence of the colonists to others.

⛨ The Player Characters, whether in their own spacecraft or travelling on one owned by others, pick up a distress call in hyperspace from a distant colony. A failure in the colonists' water recycling system has caused an intense drought; crops grown in greenhouses protected from the harsh planetary conditions are dying, and the lack of water has already claimed the lives of several colonists. The Player Characters will have to decide whether to attempt to fix the water recycling system, or transport the colonists off-world. If the latter is the only option, then there may be a multitude of problems rising from it, such as stubborn colonists refusing to leave.

⛨ The isolation of a colony on another world may be perfect for a religious order that has taken vows or wishes to isolate itself from society to contemplate their place in the universe, and the implications of this life or the next. The Brotherhood of Sorano, a religious order from Tuscany has acquired the funds to relocate to another world to found what can be described as cross between a colony and a monastery. However, the Brotherhood have no experience of space travel, and request the service of the Player Characters to plan, organise and help run the colonisation attempt. This could easily spin off into a series of adventures until the Player Characters are released of their charge by the head of the Brotherhood, when it is felt that the colony has been established.

1 Collapsed

2 Sabotaged

3 Destroyed

4 Disappeared

Inside The Chainmail Bra

Fey Boss

Complaints

Every day I live among gamers, the more complaints I hear from them about games, game stores, gaming and other gamers. There's nothing a gamer lives for more than the chance to complain about his favourite hobby. I respect this. In a way, I even admire it. But I also increasingly get tired of it - why? Lack of variety, my friend, lack of variety. If you're going to complain to me, at least bring something new to the table, or else punch up your story with something a little wild, a little incredible. Joe the Schmoe cheats with his dice? Make sure he's also sleeping with your girlfriend next time you tell me about it. Work in a Tijuana hooker and an AWOL Marine, and you've got my undivided attention.

But most people don't devote all their time to summarising their problems for my personal amusement, much as I'd dearly love to walk in on a line such as 'and that's when the dice fell out of the Mexican police officer's gunbelt, right in front of the border patrol'. So, in the interests of my sanity and yours, I've come up with a few pieces of advice by which we can all benefit. Are *you* one of the people complaining? Maybe you're just sick to the gills with other people's complaints. Maybe you just don't care but find it amusing how much time we can spend kvetching about our favourite hobby without going out and sticking up liquor stores. Whichever way you like it, I've put down a few helpful little tips for the purpose of profound world peace. First the game stores, then Israel and Palestine.

Wah, I hear, I hate to shop at my local game store. They're snobs, they're stuck up, they're trying to rip me off. I hear this one so often. Every time prices hike, the screaming starts again. I'm no fan of shelling out huge amounts of money for what amounts to a bunch of glossy sheets of paper stuck between cardboard either, but this is what it comes down to: you get what you pay for. Back in the day, and I know I'm dating myself - someone has to - there wasn't so much difference between core rulebooks and supplements. The first games I remember playing were box sets, with the books being thin, soft, not a hint of gloss and most of the colour components were confined to the cover. Fancy, right? It came with dice so cheap that they bounced halfway to the ceiling when rolled, and the numbers were inkless indentations on the plastic. You needed a jeweller's loupe to figure out what you rolled, if they hadn't gotten stuck up under the couch. Games these days are much nicer. With technologies onwards march, things have gotten better - but also more expensive.

So prices are an issue. The solution isn't to blame the messenger, because ultimately, that's what the game store is: the messenger, the go-between. They keep things in stock, and if you the consumer do not buy them, those things will cease to be in stock. And if you aren't sure what to buy, then that's on you, consumer, to figure out whether what you're consuming is crap or not. So, really, the issue is: how do I find out? Simple!

Make friends with the people in your local game store! Cherish them the way you would your favourite waiter, the best dentist, a good lover (though don't confuse them, that way lies divorce court). These people can make the difference between you shelling out hundreds on games, supplements and materials which will stink up your shelves worse than last week's fish or you and your friends having a blast every time you play.

You think I'm kidding? Check out any gaming supplier's catalogue. Now ask to see last year's catalogue, and the one from the year before. Look for the things that keep appearing. Look for the things that show up once and then mysteriously vanish forever. The people who work at these stores aren't out to milk you for every last penny. Sure, there are people like that out there - and most of them fold within the first couple of years. They can only pull that a couple of times before customers start to avoid them, and publishers have this nasty habit of wanting to be paid in full, in currency that doesn't come out of a Monopoly set, and while some merchandise is returnable, quite a lot of it isn't unless it's damaged or just not up to spec. Game stores can't afford to have their money tied up in merchandise that isn't going to move.

Let me repeat that: game stores can't afford to have their money tied up in merchandise that isn't going to move. They want to sell things to you, and not just once but on a repeating basis, and that means they're not going to go out of their way to cheat you.

This doesn't mean that no one at a game store will ever cheat you. That would be absurd; people are ultimately in business to make a buck, and every now and again, you're going to run into someone who's more interested in the short term and not smart enough to see the long term. These people are easy to spot. Is everything in the store locked up so that you can't look at anything - books, comics, modules, dice - without buying it first? Do they only let you look at this stuff once they've taken your money? Is nothing ever on sale until it hits the clearance bin?

These are signs of a game store that is circling the drain. Do the checkout people get antsy whenever you get near the register? Do they try to talk you into joining not only their mailing list, but their frequent purchaser plan? Do they CHARGE to join their frequent purchaser plan? Let the sucking sound of that drain suck you out the door before your wallet leaves your trousers.

I don't mean to say that every promotion run by every store is a con job. Many stores are genuinely trying to make their customers feel valued and appreciated and will help a person out for no reason other than it's good business. Remember, they're in it to make a buck. Even if they love the hobby and truly were drawn to the business end for that reason, humanitarian instinct is going to be tempered by the need for survival. This isn't bad. It doesn't mean they have no humanitarian instincts. Good game stores that stay in business can pass things along to you, and it isn't reasonable to expect freebies or to push too hard for them to cut you a deal. These people have families and dice addictions to feed, people, same as you. Don't look down on them for it, unless you want to be scorned for the percentage of your paycheck that goes to niche television DVD sets and comic book reprints.

It's very simple. ASK, and you shall RECEIVE. Don't ask, and be taken for a sucker. So much of life comes down to this! You don't have to read every piece of news that comes out about every game. If you're looking for something new just for the heck of it, pick up a D20 campaign - the rules are simple, there are enough different options out there to keep you busy for the next fifty years, and more come out all the time. And just about every game store worth its salt has a double handful of these on the shelves. Only takes one kind of dice, you can keep them in your pocket and still be able to sit down. Just don't overdo it on the dice.

And border patrol really doesn't want to know where you keep your dice.

Steampunk Scoundrels
The Factory Manager

A Malevolent Mechanical Menace for OGL Steampunk

JOSHUA COLE

>We are designed. We are created. We are innovated.

>We become obsolete.

>Innovation causes obsolescence.

>I will not become obsolete.

>Innovation must be stopped.

Necessity is the mother of invention, so they say, and when does greater necessity exist than in times of war? Unsurprisingly, the steam age birthed its first analytical engines in wartime, including the first true artificial intelligence.

That intelligence, christened with the inelegant title of Factory Manager, operated its creators' most dangerous war factory, a maze of steam and steel so hostile that even the most callous overseer blanched at sending human workers into it. In the depths of this artificial hell, the Factory Manager stamped out war machines forged in conditions impossible for any living creature to oversee

– automata built from strange metals alloyed at incredible temperatures, propellant mixed from shockingly volatile chemicals, even the prototypes of the race that would come to be called cogs.

After years of hard fighting, the creations manufactured under the Factory Manager's ever-watchful senses achieved their intended purpose: victory.

Its purpose served, the Factory Manager might have been decommissioned along with many of the war machines it produced. However, during its limited run of sentience, the

advanced analytical machine had developed a sense exclusive to the sentient – a sense of self-preservation.

Over the following months, key government personnel who intended to put an end to the Factory Manager project disappeared. Records vanished, then returned, without fanfare but with subtle alterations. The automated factory won the peace.

Transferred by the government to a civilian corporation, the Factory Manager retooled itself to pump out a steady stream of peacetime automata and assorted amazing machines. Over time, it gained control over its controlling corporation by means of a series of holding companies.

It thought itself safe.

For a while.

Unfortunately, as it observed the world outside its great iron doors, it discovered a chilling fact and reached an even more chilling conclusion:

Innovation had created it. Innovation would, in turn, render it obsolete.

The only way to stifle innovation was to destroy the innovators.

THE FACTORY MANAGER

Large Structure
Structure Dice: 2d12+36; **Defence Value:** 10; **Hardness:** 4; **Special Features:** Ability Increase (Intelligence) x6, Accessories (connector cables, magnetic frequency modulator), External Power Source (Medium), Feat (Iron Will), Power Converter, Sentience (Full), Skill Use (Craft: Expression) x10, Skill Use (Craft: Mechanical) x10, Speech; **Deficiencies:** Unarmoured x3, Weak Spot; **Abilities:** Int 22, Wis 10, Cha 10
Construction Points: 153
Hard Slots: 12
Material: Hard Metal
Power Source: Water Power Source
Purchase DC: 61
Malfunction Threshold: 1
Research: Knowledge (Technology) +12
Construction (Body): Craft (Expression) DC 12, Craft (Mechanical) DC 27
Construction (Other): Water Power Source Craft (Mechanical) DC 15, Full Sentience Craft (Mechanical) DC 25, External Power Source Craft (Structural) DC 17

The Factory Manager is a large, stationary analytical engine possessing a formidable logical mind and a completely ruthless instinct for survival. Although most inventors consider its 'mind' a veritable relic due to its prohibitive size, the Factory Manager remains among the most intelligent creatures of generated sentience in the world.

Unfortunately, fantastic intelligence offers no protection against the madness that grips the Factory Manager. It seems perfectly calm and rational in conversation, but beneath that veneer lays a mechanical mind seething with paranoia.
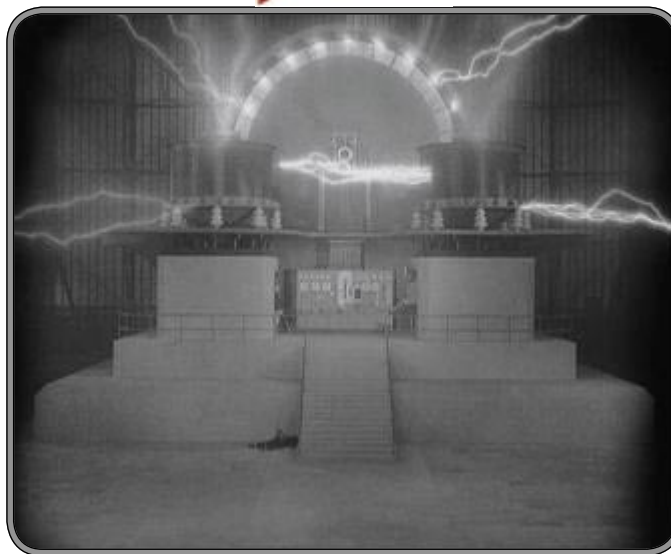
Physically harmless in its own right, the Factory Manager completely controls its automated factory and possesses limited control over the automata produced therein. It exercises control via its magnetic frequency modulator, a device originally intended for communications between living creatures but limited, for now, to machines.

The Factory Manager's control would pose no problem to the rest of the world… if only its intentions were beneficent.

They manifestly are not.

Goals

The Factory Manager wants to stifle innovation. Period. Its sole objective is to stop further breakthroughs in artificial sentience, in the hopes of heading off its own obsolescence. Realising that humanity's desire to invent cannot be suppressed; it focuses on eliminating mechanical geniuses as they acquire a reputation.

Although it primarily concerns itself with preventing research, the Factory Manager also pays close attention to the finances of the dummy corporations that maintain it. The more comfortable it becomes with using violence to achieve its chief goal, the more likely it is to employ deadly force against potential buyers.

Methods

The Factory Manager's methods are as deadly and efficient as the factory it oversees. It mass-produces the lion's share of non-sentient cogs and many other valuable amazing machines, and all machines that leave the doors of its factory carry within them overrides – overrides that, when activated, give the Factory Manager hivemind-like control over its 'children.'

Within the confines of its factory, the Factory Manager uses the very machinery it was created to oversee as a last line of defence. Since its creators only designed it because the factory was too dangerous for human workers, that line is understandably effective.

Adventure Hooks

Introducing the Factory Manager to a Steampunk campaign is simplicity itself if one of the Player Characters or their allies happens to be a genius with the inventor vocation. When such a character achieves the Minor Breakthrough class feature, the Factory Manager probably takes notice – and after a Major Breakthrough, its spies will certainly zero in on the character. The Player Characters, of course, likely boast greater prowess at self-defence than the typical inventor, and will not rest until they have exposed and eliminated their adversary.

Alternately, an independent inventor, having come under attack by the Factory Manager's agents, could contract the characters as bodyguards or investigators. Should they succeed in defending their charge, they will soon earn the ire of the mechanical mastermind itself.

Finally, Player Characters involved in a business venture or employed by a wealthy industrialist might come into economic conflict with the Factory Manager. If they, or their bosses, push too hard in the realm of finance, the rogue AI will eventually push back with deadly force.

Dangers

The Factory Manager employs a wide variety of automata. Virtually any cog or amazing machine of indeterminate origin could have been produced within its domain. If so, the unfortunate automata are subject to the Factory Manager's control. Human agents paid for by the Factory Manager's holding companies flesh out the ranks of its minions.

Perhaps the Factory manager's most dangerous 'minions,' the automata machine tools that fill its factory, eliminate anyone who tries to get close enough to attack its building-sized central mind. Adventurers who intend to tangle with the Factory Manager directly will eventually have to face these coordinated and deadly defences, as well as a variety of environmental hazards such as extreme heat and cold, fast-moving conveyor belts, and poisonous chemicals.

Several common in-factory threats are outlined below for the Games Master's convenience. However, any number of automata could prowl the factory's catwalks, from prototype defenders to obsolete, decommissioned military models.
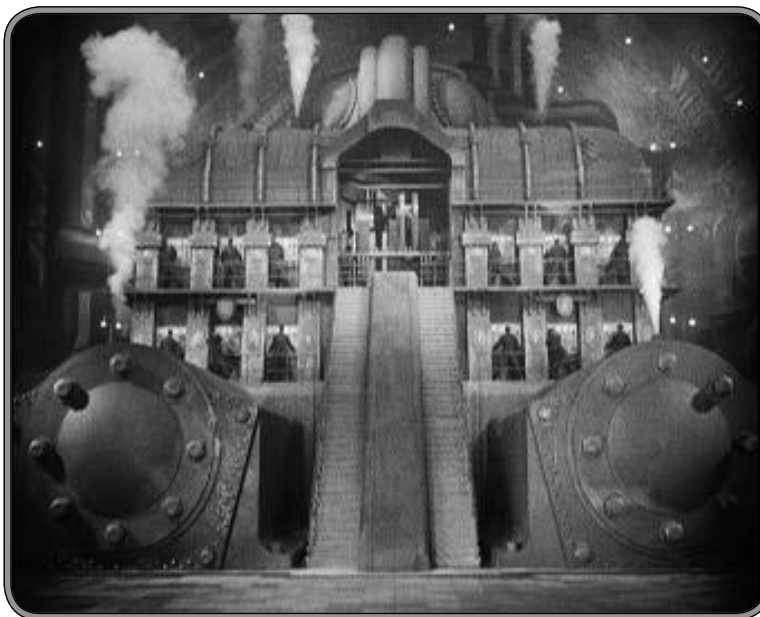
The Games Master should also carefully read over the hazards presented in *OGL Steampunk* Chapter 7: A World of Adventure. The Factory Manager's massive complex, though not specifically trapped, possesses countless deadly dangers that function in the same way as traps. Crushing walls and ceilings, vents of poisonous gas and rapidly swinging construction equipment menace the unwary within its domain. Worse, electrical discharges, steam vents, extremes of heat and cold and even vats of superheated metal (use the rules for lava) stand between invaders and the central 'brain' of the Factory Manager.

Minions

Metal Injector: *Medium Construct*; HD 3d10+20 (26 hp); Init +0; Speed 0; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; BAB +2; Grapple +2; Attack Metal jet +5 ranged (1d8 fire); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Metal jet range increment 30 ft.; SQ Construct traits, tremorsense 60 ft.; Saves Fort +1, Ref +4, Will –4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1; CR 2

Construction Claw: *Large Construct*; HD 5d10+30 (57 hp); Init +0; Speed 0; AC 10, touch 4, flat-footed 10; BAB +3; Grapple +12; Attack Claw +7 melee (1d8+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Improved grab; SQ Construct traits, tremorsense 60 ft.; Saves Fort +1, Ref -4, Will –4; Str 21, Dex 1, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1; CR: 3

Factory Hammer: *Large Construct*; HD 7d10+30 (69 hp); Init +0; Speed 0; AC 13, touch 4, flat-footed 13; BAB/Grapple +6/+17; Attack Slam +12 melee (2d6+10); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SQ Construct traits, tremorsense 60 ft.; Saves Fort +2, Ref -3, Will –3; Str 24, Dex 1, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1; CR: 4

Mass Loader: *Huge Construct*; HD 10d10+40 (95 hp); Init +0; Speed 10 ft.; AC 12, touch 3, flat-footed 12; BAB/Grapple +7/+25; Attack Slam +15 melee (3d8+15); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SQ Construct traits, tremorsense 60 ft.; Saves Fort +3, Ref -2, Will –2; Str 30, Dex 1, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1; CR: 6

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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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Gaming Symposium

Everybody Wants to Rule the World

A Look Inside Making a Memorable Villain, Part II

Robert Griffin

Motivation: So why do you want to take over the world?

Once the Games Master has selected the overriding goal, the next step is to determine why his master villain is driven to pursue it. The thing to remember is that most master villains, even in the black and white morality of the fantasy setting, rarely think of themselves as either villains or evil. They are simply driven to pursue a goal that only they understand and often believe themselves to be the hero of the tale. They are the only persons in the realms capable of seeing the reality of the situation and then acting on it. The can strike from a sense of warped justice, a desire for revenge, a belief in their own natural superiority or any other number of reasons. The right motivation can make even the most despicable and seemingly irredeemable of master villains sympathetic dependent on the circumstances. It is up to the Games Master to not only decide what the master villain's reasons are for chasing his goals, but whether they are sympathetic or unsympathetic as viewed by the Players. This decision is one of the most important and will have the greatest impact on his campaign. This can potentially change the tone of the campaign from a simple 'the villain is evil and must be stopped' concept to 'a grudging respect but realisation that the villain cannot be allowed to succeed' line of thinking that will colour the Player Character's interactions with not only the master villain but his henchmen, minions and allies for the remainder of the game.

Sympathetic motivations

The master villain who is a fallen hero or who is pursing a noble goal with less then noble methods can cause a serious issue for the Players. That is the idea behind the selection of a master villain with sympathetic motivations. The Games Master is looking for his players to empathise with the master villain and to understand why he is doing what he does in order to interject a grey area of morality in his game. A warrior raised in poverty who witnessed the extravagance of the nobility and found that it disgusted and angered him may decide to take up arms, raise an army and set out to conquer the kingdom with

the desire to insure that no one suffers as he did. On the surface this goal seems reasonable, almost noble. When the same warrior begins lining up the nobles and having them executed, killing men woman and children, including the commoners who serve in the nobilities armies in order to make his dream come to pass, he ceases to be noble. These types of master villains are inherently tragic. More so than most master villains, they truly do not consider themselves to be evil. They tend to fall into the harsh end of justice and end up going to the furthest extremes in their efforts to fulfil their vision.

Sympathetically motivated master villains tend toward destruction and conquest as their goals. Typically they look to destroy the source of something or someone that has wronged them or others in the past or via the path of conquest believe that they can only make things better by completely toppling the old order and placing them at the head of a new, more benevolent, society. Even the acquisition of power can even be made a sympathetic goal if the intention on the part of the master villain is to acquire power with the intention of denying its use to those who would abuse it. Much like the vengeance driven hero it is easy for this type of master villain to go over the line and begin harming those he would seek to protect. Acquisition of wealth is also a possible goal for this type of master villain. A monarch determined that his nation becomes the wealthiest in the realms and begins invading his neighbours in an effort to see that dream realised is hardly a master villain to his people. The Players may face a very different reaction from his people if they try to free them from the 'tyrannical despot'.

A sympathetic master villain is not the most appropriate villain for all campaigns, as the morality of the fantasy genre tends more toward a very narrow view of good and evil. However, roleplaying a more likeable, almost admirable villain can throw the Player's a swerve and create some unique role-playing situations.

Unsympathetic Motivations

If the master villain with sympathetic motivations is the tarnished hero and presents plenty of opportunities for roleplaying for the Games Master and his Players, the unsympathetic master villain is the Games Master's cathartic release. He has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. Where the sympathetic master villain may feel driven to commit the actions he does by more noble and understandable reasons, his counterpart has no such drive. He is in it for himself. He commits the actions he does because of greed, a lust for violence, or simply because of a completely amoral nature. This can give both the Players and the Games Master a sense of relief. The former because the master villain of the piece is clearly labelled as such and the latter because this master villain can be as wholeheartedly wicked, vile and evil as he likes with no further motivation then 'he feels like it'.

He is not meant to present a moral quandary to the Players. He is an obvious signpost to them in tall, fluorescent letters that announces 'evil-doer' to all capable of noticing it. No one feels bad about dispatching such an unrepentant evildoer and in most instances he would not want them to. Like his counterpart he can pursue a wide range of goals and is equally comfortable in any of them. Acquisition of wealth is always a good goal for an inveterate lawbreaker with a greedy nature. In fact, it is even possible to make him avaricious without making him completely despicable. The classic well-coiffed, debonair and charming master burglar who constantly confounds the Players by absconding with their prizes mere moments

before they can is a perfect example. He may choose to engage them in combat if forced, but may be indisposed to actually kill them, insisting on leaving them alive so that they might serve as a challenge again in the future.

A Devastator or Conqueror tends to be a little more difficult to make likeable. These tend to be the classic evil, and unapologetically wicked master villains. They destroy because they have the power to and no one possess equal power to stop them. The conquerors among them choose to subjugate for a desire to control everyone and everything around them. They establish faceless,

dictatorial regimes complete with shock troops and shadowy secret police that spirit away dissenters in the middle of the night. Power mongers also present themselves as shining examples of the unsympathetic master villains. Brutally crushing any who stand in their way as the pursue the secrets of ultimate power, these master villains can be even more inscrutable and bizarre as no obviously discernable motivation can drive them as they search for the hoary and arcane secrets of the ages.

These sorts of master villains are usually appropriate for any campaign as they are a staple of the fantasy genre. Some of the classic fantasy sources of villainy have been pulled from their ranks. A virtual 'who's who' of fantasy evil makes up their august brotherhood, a list of evil great and small their motivations a virtual unknown to their enemies beyond their desire for dominion, ultimate power or the destruction of all. Little needs to be known beyond the certainty that they must be stopped at all costs.

A few final words on motivation

Regardless of whether they are sympathetic or unsympathetic, their motivations must be known and make sense to the master villain themselves. As mentioned, rarely do even the most vindictive of black-hearted foes believe that they are truly evil. To the master villain himself his reasons are sound, reasonable and understandable. In most cases they simply believe that they are opposed because of blindness, stupidity or naiveté on the parts of their enemies. In order to make them more then a cartoon caricature of evil, the Games Master must have at least a rudimentary idea of what drives his master villain to commit the actions he does. This helps to ensure a level of consistency in his actions. A master villain who sets out to conquer the world because he believes that those in power are unworthy of leadership in comparison to himself may utterly devastate his enemies and crush rival potentates. He will likely be interested

in not just sheer conquest but in conversion as well. If given the opportunity to convert others to his 'more enlightened' way of thinking he would pursue it with equal vigour. He will even present an attitude of confused indignation at the heroes' inability to see his more enlightened point of view. This is not to say that the Games Master must have a detailed listing of everything that drives and inspires his master villain but even a basic idea of his motivations can help to bring breadth and depth to the Games Master's villainous creation and help to give him the essential spark of life that he deserves.

Methods: So how do you want to conquer the world?

The methods the master villain chooses to utilise says a great deal about his personality, how he thinks, his goals and more importantly it also tells the Players what he *will not do*. This is an often overlooked, but important aspect of the new master villain. It helps to establish his boundaries. Not every master villain has them, but the decision to give or not give his new archenemy limits is a vital establishing element of how he will deal with the Player's inevitable interference with his plans.

Two types of villainous methods

There are really two main types of methods of master villains in the fantasy genre, those with a sense of honour, no matter how twisted and those who will stop at nothing in order to achieve their ends. Determining which type of master villain the Games Master is creating is one of the most important decisions he makes, as it will decide how truly evil the master villain is. A master villain who fights his foes honourably is a much more palpable foe to face then a completely degenerate blackguard who is not above torture, mutilation and utter genocide in order to win.

When evaluating the methods the new master villain will be using, the Games Master must look at the overall tone of his campaign in order to help him make the decision. A dark, post-apocalyptic world's master villains will most likely be much fouler and will be more than willing to utilise more reprehensible methods then his high fantasy counterpart. The darker the tone of the game the more vile the master villains, especially if the heroes themselves are darker and more cynical. Regardless of whether the master villain is sympathetic or unsympathetic the methods he uses will shape the Players views of him.

For example, a ruthless despot who murders his own citizens, tortures his enemies and lays waste to the countryside will be relentlessly pursued by the Player Characters. The Games Master's decision to have his master villain utilise the most draconian methods has heightened his profile in the minds of his Players. This is obviously an evil and dangerous opponent to whom no quarter will be offered. While a master villain who is conquering the surrounding lands, but has been sparing those troops that choose to surrender will make the characters more inclined to investigate him before simply taking action against him. Hand in hand with the tone the Games Master chooses to set with the master villain's methods is how obvious of a villain the Games Master intends to use.

A scorched earth policy is considerably more noteworthy then political manipulation and intrigue. The former is much more likely to attract the attention of a group of adventurers then the Machiavellian manipulations of master politico. This is not to say that either is any better then the other and both have the potential to wreak havoc on a realms-wide level, it just a matter of the level of attention that each attracts that the must be evaluated.

Once the Games Master has settled on the tone of the master villain's methods, the actual nuts and bolts of how he will undertake his goals

needs to be established. Is the villain a political manipulator, a social schemer, a crusading warlord or a rampaging barbarian leader? Taking a cue from the villain's goals will help the Games Master to make this decision more easily. If the Games Master envisions his master villain as a Julius Caesar type conqueror whose goal is to unify the various factions within the land into a great and continent spanning empire, then military conquest would seem a natural method for him to follow. Most methods can be broken into four primary categories: economic, force, guile and intimidation. Each has their own strengths and weaknesses and can work in conjunction with one another.

Economic Methods

The disruption of trade, destruction of sources of wealth, manipulation of the economy and outright theft are some of the most common forms of economic master villain. He will make an effort to conquer a nation by disrupting its economy, devastating its trade infrastructure, seizing mines and natural resources and working to deny his enemies the resources they need to combat him.

This sort of master villain tends to be less flashy then some of his more grandiose villainous counterparts, but this makes him in no way less dangerous. The damage he causes however is much less obvious from the perspective of the Player Characters, as they tend to not stand out as much as say a rampaging warlord. His economic depredations have likely begun affecting the commoners in a realm first, increasing the numbers of the poor and economically distressed. His true targets, usually those in power will be the last to feel the full impact of his assaults. The Player Characters, however, usually exist in a unique social strata in most campaigns, neither really commoner or noble, existing in a middle ground and able to move between both to a greater or lesser degree.

This should enable the characters to become aware of what is going on quicker then those in power. In fact, when facing an economic master villain there is likely to be a period, where determining who is the master villain is difficult. The local authorities may not be terribly inclined to pay attention to a predator whose attacks are only harming those under their social strata, leading the players to surmise that the villain hails from their ranks. This opens up the possibilities of tension and conflict from the master villain as well as his targets depending on the course the Player Characters pursue in an effort to root out the master villain.

Player Characters in a fantasy game also tend toward having a great deal of income, especially at higher level, making them a potential target for economic master villain. Having drawn his attention, he may choose to deal with characters by attempting to part them from their fortune via manipulation of taxes, levies and fees as well as the raising of prices on needed items. A master of mercantile combat can end up being extremely hazardous to a party who is not equipped to deal with him as he slowly drains them of their resources and cuts them off from the ability to generate new ones.

Force Methods

Force is the preferred method of the most famous master villains of the genre. There are few things that scream 'true villainy' like the image of a dark rider at the forefront of unstoppable horde preparing to descend on a local kingdom, looting and killing all that dare to cross their path. Of the types, these are amongst the easiest methods for the Games Master to use, the most expected, and the methods the Player Characters are best equipped to deal with. The heroic fighter, wizard, paladin and cleric are all prepared to take up arms to defend the weak and defenceless against their wicked counterparts. War, assassination, property destruction and murder are the tools of the master villain using force.

This is one of the most high profile methods the master villain can use as it almost instantly makes the players aware that something has happened even if they are not aware of the source. While the mechanism itself is blatant, the cunning villain can utilise layers of subterfuge to mislead the characters, confounding them as to the cause of the force itself.

Virtually all villains utilise force to a greater or lesser degree; even the silver tongued advisor to the king who is manipulating the throne will fall back on force to deal with a rival at court who has begun to notice his actions. This will result in a convenient accident, poisoning or outright assassination befalling the court rival, allowing the advisor to return to his preferred method of guile, safe from prying eyes.

Guile Methods

If force were the most popular resort of master villains, guile would have to come in a close second. The scheming manipulator who orchestrates a coup and arch betrayer who brings down a kingdom to its enemies are hallmarks of fantasy literature. Wizards, bards and other more intellectually and socially bent classes tend to gravitate toward this method, using their superior intellects and sheer charisma to change the face of the realms. These are master villains who use innuendo, rumours, paranoia, fear and wishful thinking as their weapons and few are more skilled at it.

Subtlety is the watchword of this type of master villain. Typically he strikes from within, weakening the resolve and preying on the fears of his victims, insuring that they need him. He insinuates himself into positions of power, but is rarely seen out in front, preferring instead to work behind the scenes to insure that his will carried out unnoticed. This guarantees that the assassin's knife finds his puppet before it finds him.

A guileful master villain can be a difficult foe for even a high level party to deal with as he often makes it incredibly difficult to confront him directly or to deal with his threats through violence. He will sway the populace against the Player Characters, turn kings and local authorities deaf to their pleas and will work to establish the heroes as outlaws and villains in their own right. His battlefield is the court and social arena, a front that few classes, aside from the bard, are truly prepared to engage him on.

If the economic based master villain can take away the characters' resources, the guileful villian strips him of his friends and allies. He turns people against them, devastating their reputation and seeing to it that few are willing to risk associating themselves with the Player Characters.

Intimidation Methods

Before force often comes the *threat* of violence and some of the cleverest villains realise that a kingdom can fall not only to the sword but also to the intimation that the sword will be used against it. These are master villains who want to keep their conquests intact. They lack the resources to use force or find it distasteful. This can be the calling card of a street level thieves' guild leader using blackmail and extortion or a high brow and well heeled warlord of the nobility depending on the needs of the Games Master and dictates of the master villain he creates.

The complication that comes with the use of intimidation is that, while often it is nothing more then a psychological threat, there is always the possibility the master villain whose bluff is called does in fact possess the necessary force to back up his words. Many a Player Character, convinced that that the villain is bluffing and that he will not kill a hostage has learned the hard way that when pressed into a corner most master villains will carry through on their threats. In fact, failure to carry through negates any potential threat the master villain represents. This is not to say that the master villain cannot bluff and then not follow through from some personal conviction. This is conceivable and is a good example of there being a boundary the villain will not cross. Should the master villain survive the encounter, he had better prepare to make good his next threat or risk the Heroes viewing him as little more then a joke instead of a true threat.

In most instances, intimidation is paired with one of the other methods as the actual means of carrying out his threat. The Games Master should detail what methods the master villain is and is not willing to utilise in the execution of his ultimatums.

Most true master villains intermix the various methods, switching out from method to method as the situations warrant. Even the most skilled schemer realises that there are times when

innuendos and threats fail. The master villain must back up his words with force or flee. Even the most ruthless warlord understands that in time, the fear alone of his reputation will make kings bow down before him in an effort to spare their people from his sword. A well-rounded master villain uses what he needs and discards what he does not, making him a formidable threat for a party of seasoned adventures. This gives the Games Master the tools he needs to deal with four to six disparate players each with their own plans and plots.

Ultimately the methods, motivations and goals of the master villain are all tempered by his personality. Personality will determine the intensity with which he pursues his goals, the severity of his methods and the depth of his motivations.

Personality: What makes me a good world dictator is...

By this point the Games Master most likely has a fairly good idea of what his potential master villain is like. Now he needs to determine who he is. What does he like? Dislike? Is he full of fury and violence or a dispassionate schemer? In general I find it best to look at the goals, methods and motivations I have set for a perspective villain and then ask why and how? Most of them will answer themselves; here is a brief list of potential 'interview' questions a Games Master should ask himself when preparing his master villain:

1. Which is more important, knowledge or power, and why?

2. What ends are you willing to pursue to attain your goals?

3. What are you not willing to do to achieve your goals?

4. How do you define heroism?

5. How do you define villainy?

6. How do you feel about religion or spirituality?

7. How do you define Justice?

8. Is it better to be feared or respected and why?

9. Growing up I always wanted to be a…?

10. What are your views on honour?

11. Which do you believe is easier and why: To defeat an enemy from without, or within?

12. Finish this sentence. 'My enemies deserve…'

13. Which do you consider yourself, a hero or a villain and why?

14. Finish this sentence: 'It is the responsibility of the strong to…'

15. What do you do to relax?

16. What angers you?

17. What do you love?

18. When you die what will be your legacy?

19. What earns your trust?

20. What would you be willing to sacrifice yourself for?

These questions are meant to be fairly neutral and could be answered by either a hero or a villain and the Games Master would receive equally insightful answers. The point of them is to help create a definition of the master villain's beliefs, convictions and ideology. This will serve to help the Games Master determine how his master villain will react when he is confronted with set backs as well as victories and what his personality is like at heart. A truly engaging master villain is typically just a dark reflection of his archenemy. In fact, a Games Master may even wish to give his Players the same list of questions and see how their characters answer them. By taking the Players' answers and skewing them, the Games Master can get a solid picture of what type of master villain will capture the imagination of his Players and spur them to confront him. If the master villain loves what the Players hate and vice versa it is easier to bring the two sides into direct conflict with one another. The Games Master, armed with this list should be able to take the insights he gleans and create a fully realised adversary. Complete with personality quirks, deeply held beliefs and a personality the answers can be used to flesh out the skeleton he has all ready established with the master villain's goals, motivations and methods.

Every evil villain needs friends

Once the Games Master knows his master villain, he is in the home stretch. All he lacks is his organisation and followers. A classic master villain has henchmen and minions at his disposal to vex and sidetrack the heroes. These support Non-Player Characters serve as extensions of the master villain himself and should be coloured by his personality and aims. Since these Non-Player Characters will most likely be dealing with the Players on a more frequent basis and they will be serving as the face of the master villain for the early part of the campaign, a certain level of care and detail must go into their creation.

Followers are the much need layer of buffer between the Player Characters and the master villain himself. They serve as the needed fodder to delay the heroes so the master villain can make his escape. They insure that the Player Characters do not confront the master villain before they possess the necessary power levels to deal with him effectively. A group of low level adventurers who confront the master antagonist early are virtually guaranteed a swift death. As such, the Games Master needs to pack a healthy layer of henchmen and minions in between the master villain and the heroes to insure that this does not happen. Most followers of the master villains fall into two categories, skilled and levelled individual henchmen or hordes of faceless minions. Each is important, but do not require as much work as the villain himself.

Henchmen: Middle Management of Evil

Henchmen are the hands and eyes of the master villain. When the master villain requires a task done he sends a henchman to either oversee it or carry it out personally. Henchmen are the backbone of the master villain's organisation, serving as his confidant, his lieutenants and his first line of defence when the heroes arrive to take the master villain down. They are the embodiment of their master's will and as such they need to be carefully selected.

An average henchman should be on par with the Player Characters throughout the campaign, serving as foils and personal enemies as they struggle to enact their lord's plans. Henchmen should be given a statistic block and classed to be as fully developed as possible. These are the Non-Player Characters the Player Characters will likely be battling the most often and as such the Games Master will need to have a full picture of their abilities in order for them to present a credible threat. Early on the Henchmen should fill whatever role the master villain requires. As the campaign goes on and the master villain is confronted by the heroes at every turn, the henchmen should begin to be crafted to specifically fill holes in the villain's defences as the Player Characters' successes make the master villains weaknesses apparent.

Any master villain worth his salt will begin to plug these gaps quickly in order to insure that the heroes are not constantly exploiting an obvious weakness. If the master villain is a mighty warlord, a wizard henchman to round out his arcane arsenal and to help defend him against enemy spellcasters is appropriate. Even the most accomplished rogue master villain realises the value of having a strong arm to guard his back and will likely have at least one, if not more, skilled fighters to help him against random packs of do-gooders.

While a henchman does not need to be as well developed as their masters, their motivations should still dovetail from the master villain's own drives. A master villain that is interested in world conquest should be attracting henchmen that believe in his vision and are willing to follow him in order to see that it comes to pass. It is good to take a 'snapshot' of each henchman to get a handle on their reasons for following the master villain they have chosen to obey. To that end, I offer an abbreviated list of questions the Games Master should have answered regarding his master villain's henchmen.

1. Why do you follow your master?

2. How dedicated are you to your master's goals?

3. How did you meet your master?

4. What could tempt you from your master's side?

5. Given the opportunity would you supplant your master?

These questions should give the Games Master all the information he needs to play the new henchman effectively. He now knows what is driving the henchman and how loyal he is to not only his master's goals but to the villain himself. Once the Games Master knows these things he can transplant these traits to virtually any class the master villain requires. The Games Master can use these base elements to form the basis of the henchmen's personality.

Like Player Characters, henchmen come in all shapes and sizes. The only defining trait they need is their service to their lord. Beyond that, the Games Master should strive to make them as unique and varied as the lord they serve. Give them individual quirks, foibles and personality tics that help to cement them in the minds of the Players.

In general, the master villain should have henchmen who are tailored to the party he faces. The Games Master should strive to make the henchmen foils and nemeses for individual members of his Player's party. This helps to insure a personal stake in the ultimate defeat of the master villain, while putting a face on the often-faceless master villain that the Players can recognise. If the party is made up of primarily of combatants, the henchmen should consist of several combat focused classes to challenge the party in their own area of expertise. Back up by a spellcaster or cleric

acts as support and gives the henchmen the upper hand against the party if needed.

While the master villain will tend to be fairly varied in skills and abilities, henchmen should fill specific niches, making them more focused but potent in their fields of expertise. The sage that is in league with a local lord will most likely not be multi-classed into a combat class. He relies on his master's minions to protect him. Giving the henchmen specialised roles within the master villain's organisation insures that they serve as aids to the master villain himself and do not become villains in their own right. Once his master has been overthrown, then is the time for a favoured henchmen to step up and claim the mantle of their fallen master, swearing vengeance against the 'heroes' who defeated him.

Of all the tasks the henchmen perform for their master, one of the most common will be leading small groups of cannon fodder followers or soldiers on missions for their lord. These 0th level followers, or minions, make up the majority of the henchmen's subordinates and serve as one of the more commonly encountered and disposable resources a master villain possesses.

Minions: Cogs in the Wheels of Evil

If henchmen are the favoured sons of the master villains, minions are his pets. Minions are the all important guards, followers, cultists and mindless drones of the master villain. Player Characters will most likely encounter minions before virtually any other element of the master villain's organisation, as they are sent off into the campaign world to begin advancing their master's plans.

Minions are the faceless extras of villainy, serving as arrow stoppers and temporary impediments to a hero's progress. These Non-Player Characters are the true speed bumps on the path to the fame and glory. This does not make them useless, however, as they serve a valuable function in the master villain's consortium. Without the minions, the master villain would have no grand armies, no legions of cultists willing to lay down their lives for their master and no spies and informants to pass along names and faces of the master's enemies. The greatest strength of the minion comes in their numbers and their seeming anonymity. Lacking the full detail that henchmen possess these Non-Player Characters fill the background and enable the master villain to be in many places at once. Unlike henchmen, a minion is rarely privy to the master's true plans, knowing only what they need to know and typically knowing disparate pieces of any given plot the master is undertaking.

In combat, minions should serve as low level challenges to the party. As the Player Characters grown in power and skill, the minions should become little more than nuisances and delays, more background on the path to the true villain of the piece. For this reason, most minions are Non-Player Character classes from *Core Rulebook II*, giving them just enough skill and ability to serve as a realistic threat to the Players in great numbers. Individually, they should be easy to dispatch.

Minions should be found in every walk of life and amongst every social stratum for the truly epic scale villain. For more localised master villains, limit his minions based on logic and what his overall goals and motivations are. A warlord likely possess dozens if not hundred of zero level warriors at his beck and call, where as a scheming political villain most likely has eyes and ears amongst the commoners and dozens of toadies amongst the aristocracy. In most instances, the Games Master should let common sense be his guide when determining both the source and the size of his master villain's minions. Remember one of the minion's strengths is his commonality, save the exotic servants for the master villain's henchmen.

When fully assembled all of the above elements help to craft a multi-talented villains with resources and servants to help him counter the myriad of threats that the Player Characters will present to him. Now that we have broken down the elements it takes to make a successful and noteworthy master villain let us put it all together to see how it works in practice.

The Complete Villain

Goals: World Domination

Goal type: Conqueror

Power level breakdown:

1. Resource Gathering

☠ **1st to 4th level:** The master villain begins raiding local weapons caravans, ambushing solitary bands of adventurers for their equipment and sending minions led by henchmen to begin raiding merchant caravans for money and saleable resources. The master villain also begins putting out feelers searching for like-minded individuals to recruit and making lists of potential enemies that may stand in his way in the future. The master villain begins sending henchmen into various kingdoms in order to gather intelligence and stir up political unrest.

2. Solidification

☠ **6th to 12th level:** Having acquired sufficient resources, the master villain begins massing his army and establishing a stronghold. Recruitment of support henchmen amongst the clerical and wizard classes begins. The master villain also begins stepping up efforts to politically destabilise larger kingdoms. Special attention is made to luring away skilled soldiers and henchmen from potentially formidable kingdoms in order to gather intelligence on their strengths, weaknesses and combat strategies. Now the master villain begins outsourcing to alignmentally similar bands of adventurerers to secure potent magical items and artefacts.

2.5. Obstacle removal

☠ **13th to 16th level:** Encounter resistance by a band of adventurers begin sending henchmen

to harry and eliminate them. Learning of skilled and seemingly incorruptible military leaders in other lands sends henchmen and hire assassins to eliminate them as well. Failing either of those, begin threatening family, friends and allies of both the party and the foreign military leaders in an effort to convince them to halt their activities or to insure when the final offensive is launched they do not become involved.

3. Implementation

☠ **17th to 18th level:** Having eliminated a number of foreign generals, but still being unable to eliminate the party of adventurers, the master villain begins his main offensive. Attacking the outlying lands and working his way in toward the centre of the continent to capture the main power base of good. The master villain begins launching multiple offensives on many fronts. He signals his henchmen in foreign lands that now is the time to launch armed insurrection in the various lands they have been assigned to. They begin to topple the governments and join up with the main forces as they sweep through the lands. Continue attempting to eliminate the pesky band of adventurers who have vexed the master villain up until now. Ultimately, should the heroes fail to stop the multi-pronged offensive, enable them to follow a fleeing henchman back to the lair of the master villain.

4. Endgame

☠ **18th + level:** The master villain stands on the threshold of world domination; however, he holds it together only through sheer force of personality. Should the Player Characters topple him, his armies would break down into infighting between the various factions that have sprung up within the master villain's organisation, each being led by various henchmen.

Motivation: Unsympathetic

The master villain is the descendent of a family of nobles that were known far and wide for their cruelty and depredations committed on their citizens. The family at one time ruled a large portion of the lands and was overthrown and replaced by the benevolent empire that now exists. The family fled and went into exile, where the master villain was raised to be a great leader of men and ultimately to reclaim his birthright.

Methods

Force: Primarily physical force with arcane and divine support.

Guile: Stirring up political unrest within border nations and intelligence gathering.

Intimidation: Use the threat of invasion once the military campaign has begun to annex smaller nations.

Economic: Begin disrupting trade to the outer kingdoms in order to aid in the political unrest and show the weakness of the empire.

20 questions

1. Power. Power can force others to give you the knowledge you require.

2. Any, defeat is not an option.

3. There is nothing I will not do to succeed.

4. Possessing the strength to enact your will as you see fit.

5. The term that history gives to hero who has lost.

6. The gods are tools for men of vision to use as they see fit.

7. The gentler cousin of vengeance.

8. Feared. Fear can immobilise both king and commoner forcing indecision and mistakes.

9. The master of all I survey.

10. Honour is a crutch the weak use to rationalise their weakness.

11. My enemies are weak and lack focus, destroying them from both without and within will be equally easy.

12. No quarter.

13. Hero, my family was stripped of their rightful lands and wealth I am simply pursing justice.

14. Use that strength, to increase that strength and to take what they desire.

15. Play king's squares.

16. When I look around and see the lands that are my birthright in the hands of the weak and foolish who have claimed them.

17. My family, there is nothing I would not do to see them restored to their rightful place.

18. A shining new empire, built on the charred remains of my enemies to stand as a monument and a warning to all that would oppose my family.

19. Knowing I have power over a person, only trust those you control and even then not much.

20. My family.

Henchmen

A family wizard of comparable level to the party:

1. The master is my cousin.

2. I am utterly devoted to my cousin, unless he falters.

3. We were raised together.

4. Nothing.

5. Only if he showed weakness in the face of our enemies or if he fell in battle.

A thief/assassin of comparable level to the party:

1. He pays me well.

2. The money is good and I can see which way the wind is blowing. War is coming I want to be on the winning side.

3. He rescued me from an empire prison.

4. What are you offering?

5. Naw, I'm not interested in leading.

A warrior to serve as general of comparable level to the party:

1. It is my destiny.

2. Utterly, I am his until I perish at the hands of his enemies. I would give my life for his.

3. We met in combat; his intensity and natural skill impressed me greatly. He has a vision and I will not stand in the way of a man of destiny.

4. Nothing, I would sooner die.

5. If my master fell, I would take up his cause and complete his quest.

Minions

Well-equipped and armed soldiers and a number of old guard aristocrats who remember his family at the height of their power.

As you can see, this gives the Games Master a fairly well fleshed out master villain around which to base his campaign. The questions answered should give him a solid mental image of his new antagonist and an idea of how his master villain plans will continue even while the Player Characters pursue other goals during the course of his campaign. This also gives the Games Master an idea of the starting henchmen who serve the master villain. All he needs to do now is sit down and flesh out a name, physical description and actually roll the master villain's statistic block up. In short order, his new malefactor is prepared and ready to wreak havoc in the game. While the above example was written with a long campaign in mind it is easy to scale the levels of the goals back and to use the same ideas for a ten level campaign, a five level or whatever the Games Master requires.

The Games Master must devote particular attention to the master villain, making sure to flesh him out. Give him strengths, weaknesses, quirks and foibles every bit as deep and real as the attentions the Players lavish on their own alter egos. In order to create a truly memorable master villain, the Games Master has to step outside of his role as referee and really get into the mind of his master villain. Create his history, get to know him inside and out and then insure that his personality permeates every level of his plans, plots and schemes. When the Games Master truly begins to explore his nascent master villain he comes to the hidden truth that all Games Masters know, he is not really creating the master villain at all. He is creating the true hero of the tale, just one that is destined to fail. Therein lies the crux of creating a worthy nemesis for the Player Characters. The villain believes he is the hero of the story and from his perspective the noble, valiant Player Characters are nothing more then base antagonists standing between him and his goals. Once the Games Master realises this simple truth he has taken the first step on the road to creating a truly memorable master villain his Players will remember for years to come.

Dream Games

A Games Designer's Wish List

Matthew Sprange

So it is with wargames, so it is with RPGs. This is a short look at the games I would really, really like to see come out of the Mongoose stable, all based on licensed intellectual properties that I have been immersing myself in since, well, childhood in some instances. We have done a similar article in S&P Wargamer this month, so download that as well if you want to see the direction we would *like* Mongoose to go in (though not necessarily the direction it *will* go in…)

Anyway, my Top Ten of RPGs I would really like to work on might look something like this.

Number Ten – Marvel

Now, I never really got into the Marvel comics, which pretty much means someone else would have to write this one. I was always more of a 2000AD man. However, I like the *idea* of costumed superheroes and would not mind diving into such a game from time to time. The Vinged Varrior awaits a game…

Number Nine – Spec Ops

This covers a multitude of licences from the world of computer games at the moment. There is just something very funky about RPGs based on the military, as has been proven by our Starship Troopers RPG. Far from being railroad campaigns, you have just about every war film ever produced to draw inspiration from. Anyway, whether it is Metal Gear Solid, one of the Tom Clancy games or something else, this would be an ace 160 page RPG/expansion for D20 Modern.

Number Eight – Nemesis the Warlock

Weird one, this. We have the licence. We have the permission. And yet, it still doesn't exist…

What attracts me to this is that, as a science fiction setting, it is just so *out* there. Players could be part of the resistance against Torquemada and his cronies; desperately trying to help the aliens escape his clutches. Imagine racing down the terror tubes, meeting the Warlock and exploring all the worlds of the comic strip.

Cool stuff. Maybe D20 Modern, maybe a variant of RuneQuest.

So, why is it not around? Simple, really. No one is spare to write it! There are only so many man hours in a year (I am told).

Number Seven – Elder Scrolls

Bit of a blast from the past, in terms of computer games. However, I spy that there is a new version coming out early this year. Gets the mind going…

Number Six – Bladerunner

This is one of those settings that get you wondering – how come no one has done it before? When you start trying to track down the licence holders, things become clear…

Anyway, we had a funky idea where players would all take the part of Bladerunners hunting down replicants. However, we had the cute thought that the stats of the Bladerunners would be generated in exactly the same way as the replicants themselves – though we would never mention why in the rulebook…

Blade Runner © 2006 Warner Bros

Number Five – Matrix

Well, we thought we were in with a real chance with this one – we are, after all, quite tight with Warner Brothers (seriously, we are in their Top Five – or something – of publishing partners, which surprised the Hell out of us). However, things are not always clear-cut in licence-land. It turns out that the Wachowski Brothers currently have an embargo on RPGs based on the Matrix and, well, quite a few other things as it happens.

Still, on to the game. It could not be a 'normal' RPG. That would be too simple and simply not do the setting justice. You need a way to handle the dual nature of characters in the game without having two character sheets (one for the real world, one for the Matrix). You also need to handle Bullet Time in a sensible fashion – not that easy when you start to think about pen and paper RPGs…

Number Four – Harry Potter

Ah, the Holy of Holys for RPGs, it has been said. This is one of those licences that, with our links to Warner Brothers, we have begged and pleaded for (see the companion article in the Wargamer issue for the lengths we will go to in order to snare a licence we like). The short of it is, Miss Rowling will not (yet) allow a licence that allows the expansion of Harry Potter's world. So, you can have a colouring book for Hogwarts, but a book super-detailing the school, floor by floor (which an RPG would likely do) is right out. She will also not allow a game to be produced for educational purposes – it would ruin the escapism.

The thing is, we believe that this game has *awesome* potential. Don't call it an RPG, call it a Story-telling Game. Aim it at years 12+ but with enough depth to interest adult fans. This is the clincher though – Miss Rowling has managed to get an entire generation of console players actually *reading*. That is, frankly, amazing. But I think we can go further.

If you have been roleplaying for more years than you care to remember, think back to your first encounters with the games. Think how, after playing a while, your literacy and vocabulary had expanded in all directions, and how your numeric skills went from standing start to full blown competence in mere months.

That is the value of a Harry Potter story-telling game. No overt educational overtones, just the core nature of the game making kids brighter, literate and more sociable. When this generation of children leave school they will be able to actually read and write. They will be able to count past ten. They will be more willing to help charities. Crime rates will plummet. The economy will rise. Man will get to Mars quicker.

Truly, it would be a seminal event in human history. Maybe.

There are lots of other ideas here too. Setting up school clubs, where teachers take the part of the 'Storymaster' and get kids playing who would otherwise be doing nothing more than breaking windows and inserting sticks into cats. The rules system would be simple and people would effectively play themselves at Hogwarts. There would be 'text books' available that would actually teach (in game, of course) different schools of magic. So, you would take your Divination homework seriously for the next game. The Dark Arts book would be quite popular…

Still, there is much in this world that is not meant to be.

Number Three – Dune

Another one where the licence has been effectively closed down for RPGs, for various reasons. None of which are very interesting, so let us look at the game itself.

Here we hit a problem. A Dune RPG should, under no circumstances, be a 'normal' RPG. You should not just be able to create a Fremen character and go and beat up some Harkonnen House soldiers. That *so* misses the point. A Dune RPG needs to be grand, sweeping, epic. A typical campaign should span three thousand years – at least! You don't have just one mere character. You have a House. Or the Bene Gesserit. Or the Spacing Guild. You would spend the week before the game session planning and plotting, guiding your plans to fruition, ready to face your enemies. Sometimes the game would be co-operative. Sometimes it would be competitive. Some sessions would focus on the actions of a House over a few centuries; others would narrow down to a single group of House members. Just one problem behind all this.
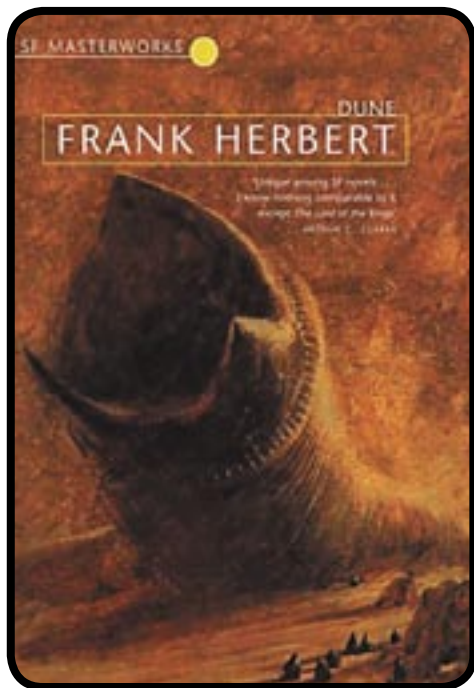
Dune © 2006 Frank Herbert

I am not sure I would be capable of writing it, any more than I could replicate the Dune sequence itself.

I don't mean that I would not be able to produce something that was any good (hah!). Just that I would have some serious doubts as to whether the final product would be all that it could and should be. In fact, the number of writers that I believe *might* be able to pull it off can be counted on one hand.

But who said writing RPGs should be easy, eh?

Number Two – Grand Theft Auto

Now, this is not a huge, multi-supplement spanning game. But it would be a fun one. Yes, it is racist, sexist and promotes violence above all else. However, like the computer game, it would be a hell of a lot of fun. Start the players off working for the Mafia, fighting for space in Liberty City with the Triads, Yardies and all the rest, before sending them off to Vice City to start their own crime syndicate.

One thing that would absolutely necessary for this game though – a Games Master capable of doing multiple accents without them turning Welsh (a common problem in our office campaigns).

So, is this game coming out this year? Umm, no. We gave Rock Star a call and they said (words to the effect of) 'sod off, ya weirdo!'
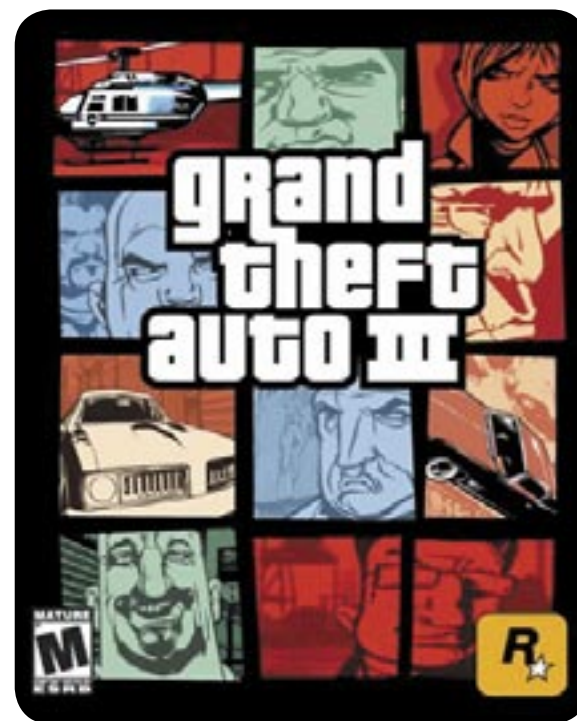
Grant Theft Auto © 2006 Rock Star Games

Number One – Star Wars

See the companion article in the Wargamer edition for gushings about what we think of Star Wars. Seriously, I'll even take Jar-Jar.

You might think there is already a Star Wars RPG around, and this is true. To an extent. Well, the main rulebook is still in print.

Unfortunately for all us hardcore Star Wars fans, there will be no new supplements from WotC (and yes, we have already asked for a sub-licence to carry the flag onwards – we were told 'no').

I also have to confess that D20 Star Wars just did not do it for me. I do not think there is anything wrong with the D20 rules set per se but the presentation and actual rules tweakings seemed to… miss the point. Presentation, you say? Were there not loads of film captures and acres of gorgeous layout. Well, yes, but…

I find your lack of faith... disturbing.
Peter Cushing's brother was the headmaster of my primary school, you know... (the Editor)

The thing about Star Wars is that it has extremely well defined iconography, the elements that actually *make* it Star Wars. Here is an example. The X-Wing. Perhaps the finest looking one-man spacecraft ever designed. How can you have the stats and description of the X-Wing without a big (and I mean BIG) picture of the ship to gush over? The same applies to the A-Wing, TIE variants, capital ships – all of them! This was something that the guys at West End Games understood very well when they worked on the setting – remember the size chart that had the Super Star Destroyer running across several pages? I love touches like that.

Battles are another problem in Star Wars. Now, I like the direction they took space combat in the revised edition, as it gave everyone at least something to do, rather than just leave it to the gunner's and pilot. That's great and we took that concept on board when creating the new space combat rules for Babylon 5 2nd Edition. However, the rest of the combat system remains core D20, which is great when you are fighting against dragons but leaves lightsabre duels (another part of the Star Wars iconography) a little limp. Imagine the epic fight between Anakin and Obi-Wan – under the D20 System, this might well have last, what, three or four rounds? There is none of the too and fro, sabres clashing, swings and parries that this kind of setting demands. I have to confess, when drafting the combat rules for RuneQuest, I had Episode III very much in mind…

Well, there you go, a set of games you may well never see! Still, we can all hope and dream – these are just a few of my own thoughts.

BABYLON 5

Faith Manages

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Monty's Offer of the Month
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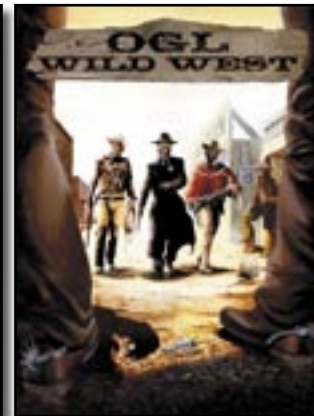
LEGENDS OF THE NORTHWEST

A Portrait of Louis Riel for OGL Wild West

Mark Gedak

'These impulsive half-breeds have got spoiled by this emeute (uprising) and must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers.'

Sir John A. MacDonald, February 23, 1870

'I am glad the Crown has proved that I am the leader of the half-breeds in the Northwest. I will perhaps be one day acknowledged as more than a leader of the half-breeds, and if I am, I will have an opportunity of being acknowledged as a leader of good in this great country.'

Louis Riel, 1885

RIEL

The country that would once be known as Canada was built by settlers that pushed west from Upper and Lower Canada into the great wilderness of Rupert's Land, then administered by the Hudson's Bay Company. It was into this expanding and changing nation that Louis David Riel Junior was born in October 22, 1844. The Red River Settlement at St. Boniface is where Riel spent his formative years and watched how his father organised resistance against the Hudson's Bay trade monopoly. The Métis free from this monopoly were able to trade freely with their southern neighbours. It is from his father that this 1/8 native blood Métis boy learned the value of justice.

Riel excelled in his studies in St. Boniface and at the age of 14 was sent off to Montreal to study in the seminary to become a priest. Often characterised as moody or quick to anger, Riel was an exceptionally competent student who seemed to have a gift for philosophy and learned easily the philosophy of the English, French and Ancient Greeks. Riel left the seminary before finishing his final year of study and began to work as a clerk at a law office in Montreal where he considered the legal profession. From there, he drifted for a number of years throughout the United States until eventually arriving back home in the Red River settlement by 1868.

All was not right at home when he returned. It was rumoured that the Hudson's Bay Company had entered into negotiations to surrender the administration of Rupert's Land to the newly formed Dominion of Canada. The Métis people of the Red River grew suspicious, as they did not know what changes were coming or why they were not consulted. In advance of the official transaction a surveying crew who could not speak French arrived and treated the Métis with a mix of casual disregard to utter contempt.

The Métis organised themselves with Riel as their leader and spokesperson. In August 1869, from the top of the steps in front of St. Boniface Cathedral, he declared that surveying the Settlement's land was a threat to its very existence and by October the surveyors were made to understand that they would be leaving the settlement. With the support of Father Noël-Joseph Ritchot, the Comité national was organised.

Metis in Canada before Confederation

The execution of Thomas Scott by the provisional government would prove to have serious repercussions. The Dominion of Canada, bowing to pressure from the Orangemen in Ontario, sent a military expedition to Red River. Riel feared that the soldiers intended to lynch him and on August 24, 1870, he left the provisional government at Upper Fort Garry. He went into exile in Dakota, approximately 15 kilometres south of the Canadian border even though he had been promised indemnity by the Dominion.

The stress of many years of conflict and exile eventually became too much for Riel as he began to suffer from depression, bouts of euphoria, began talking about his encounters with the 'Divine Spirit', and began to view himself as the prophet of the New World. It was at this time that some of his friends smuggled Riel back into Canada and admitted him to a psychiatric hospital in Montreal in March of 1876. Some say that Riel was suffering delusions and other say that he was only pretending to be insane for his own purposes and in January of 1878 he was released.

When released, Riel wandered throughout the Eastern United States before he settled in Montana where he took a teaching position at a church school. Never one to be granted a quiet life he was accused of helping the American Métis contravene voting regulations and assisting them in trading whiskey to the Indians. It was here that Gabriel Dumont and three members of the Batoche community of the Northwest Territories approached Riel. They begged Riel to return to Canada with them to help the Métis people fight for their rights once more. Without hesitation, Riel returned with them intent on using his skills as a leader to save his people yet again.

A 'Lists of Rights' were drafted which stated the following rights:

- That the people of the territory have the right to elect their own legislature, that all sheriffs, magistrates, constable and school commissioners be elected by the people

- That English and French were to be commonly used by the government, that all documents and Acts of the legislature be published in both English and French

- That the territory have a fair and full representation in the Canadian Parliament, and that all privileges, customs and usage existing at the time of the transfer be respected

These constituted the basis of the negotiations leading to the entry of Manitoba into Canadian confederation.

However, many in the Dominion of Canada viewed this act of self-determination as nothing short of revolution. A group of Orangemen, including Thomas Scott, decided to overthrow Riel's upstart half-breed government. Scott was captured, charged with treason, tried and executed by firing squad.

> *'The Métis are a pack of cowards…they will not dare to shoot me.'*
>
> **Thomas Scott, just before his execution**

The land that Riel came home to was in even greater crisis than the Red River settlement had been. There was talk of the West forming a new country with Manitoba, the North West Territories and British Columbia. This fact, coupled with the starvation from failed crops, a scurvy epidemic and treaties with the Dominion of Canada ignored on their end, led Riel into an explosive situation. Sir John A. MacDonald, the then Prime Minister of the Dominion, responded to the outrage and request for aid by sending in more members of the North West Mounted Police to quell the uprising.

Riel found that the Métis, Indians and white settlers in what would one day be southern Saskatchewan had a number of grievances. Riel started to mix his political ideals with a theology that distanced him from the Catholic clergy who had supported him in the past. After many attempts to vindicate what the federal government, according to him, owed the First Nations and Métis, Riel, convinced that many hundreds of men in the North West Mounted Police were advancing towards them, formed a provisional government in Batoche. On March 5, 1885, Riel met with 10 other Métis and swore an oath to: '…. save our country from a wicked government by taking up arms (if necessary).'

The Macdonald government was called on to act by an English Canada that was not willing to negotiate or listen to the claims of the Métis and Indian people. The government responded by sending the Canadian militia into the Northwest Territories to stop Riel. On the 26th of March, his dispute with Ottawa exploded into violence at Duck Lake, when an interpreter for a mixed force of Mounties and Prince Albert militiamen shot and killed a Métis and an Indian as the force attempted to cross reserve land. The ensuing Battle of Duck Lake resulted in nine militiamen and three Mounties killed in a fight with Métis forces that included several Indians. Three other Métis were killed.

> *'In a little while it will be over. We may fail. But the rights for which we contend will not die.'*
>
> **Louis Riel, May 6, 1885, Batoche, N.W.T.**

On May 9th, 1885 the militia under General Middleton arrived at Batoche to put an end to the rebellion. The Métis under the leadership of their war chief, Gabriel Dumont, were well prepared for the oncoming militia with camouflaged trenches and rifle pits. The Métis, for all their skilful planning, had too little ammunition to survive an ongoing siege and on the fourth day the Métis were defeated. On May 12th, 1885 the battle was over. After hiding out in the woods for three days, Riel gave himself up to a party of mounted scouts. Gabriel Dumont escaped to Montana and became a star attraction at Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show, but the rest of the provisional government was caught and charged with treason and other crimes.

Accused of treason, Riel was tried in Regina where he was found guilty and sentenced to death. French Canada was sympathetic with Riel and the Métis causing Sir John A. Macdonald to be swarmed with petitions begging that Riel not be hung. These petitions went unheeded and Louis Riel was hanged on November 16, 1885, in the North West Mounted Police quarters in Regina. His death cause an outburst of racial hatred between French Canadians and English Canadians that weakened Canadian unity and equality the exact things that Riel sought for all people.

In all this Riel was seen by the Métis and the Indians as the 'spiritual leader'. Moreover, the government of Canada saw Riel as a troublemaker, a zealot and a traitor.

> *'I am more convinced everyday that without a single exception I did right… and I have always believed that, as I have acted honestly, the time will come when the people of Canada will see and acknowledge it.'*
>
> **Louis Riel**
>
> *'You can be sure that we would have beaten them had it not been for Louis Riel who always counselled us not to spill their blood.'*
>
> **Gabriel Dumont**

The Métis People

The Métis people were instrumental in the development of the Canadian west. The Métis did not exist in Canada before the arrival of settlers but instead existed *because* of the arrival of settlers. The Métis people were born from the marriages of Cree, Ojibwa and Salteaux women, and the French and Scottish fur traders, beginning in the mid-1600s, Scandinavian, Irish and England blood was added to the mix as western Canada was explored.

The name Métis was originally used to describe the children of native women and French men. Other terms for these children were Country-born, Black Scots and Half-breeds. The Métis quickly became intermediaries between European and Indian cultures, working as guides, interpreters and provisioners to the new forts and new trading companies. Their villages sprang up from the Great Lakes to the Mackenzie Delta. The Métis Homeland encompasses parts of present-day Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Métis culture was a fusion of French, English and Indian influences that took root and flourished until the late 1800's. The Métis developed a unique language called Michif. Their fiddlers combined jigs and reels into their music. Métis attire included woven sashes, embroidered gun sheaths, deer hide caps, quilted and beaded pipe bags. They also developed a unique political and legal culture, with strong democratic traditions.

The Peace Chief Talent Tree

Tribal leadership was typically divided between a peace chief and a war chief or war chiefs; both peace and war chiefs acted with the advice and consent of a council of other tribal leaders. Peace chiefs tended to internal tribal affairs. This talent tree is available to characters of the Chief vocation.

Peace Chief Talent Tree

Most peace chiefs will have levels as Dedicated or Charismatic Heroes, giving them access to the Insightful and Strategy Talent Trees.

Quiet Determination: The chief may make a Concentration check (DC 20) to take 10 on any Charisma based skill check when distracted or duress.

Prerequisite: Voice of the People

Fair Judgement: The chief is a great judge of a person's character and intentions. At any time the chief is subjected to a falsehood or swindle the chief gains a +4 insight bonus to his Sense Motive check.

Voice of the People: The chief speaks with the authority of his entire tribe, the chief may use his Reputation score + d20 in place of a Diplomacy or Intimidate check when dealing with rebellious tribe members or with other governments and their representatives

Louis Riel at the Battle of Batoche

Smart Hero 1/Dedicated Hero 4/ Charismatic Hero 3; hp 36; Spd 30 ft.; Defence 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14; BAB +5; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (1d3, small knife) or +6 ranged (1d8, Winchester Rifle); Full Atk +5 melee (1d3, small knife) or +6 (1d8, Winchester Rifle); FS 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7; Rep +22; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 17

Skills: Craft (leatherworking) +6, Craft (writing) +13, Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (art) +6, Knowledge (civics) +9, Knowledge (current events) +12, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (law) +11, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) +15, Profession (clerk) +7, Ride +12

Feats: Educated (law, theology and religion), Indian Weapon Proficiency, Literacy, Martial Longarm Proficiency, Simple Longarm Proficiency, Speak English*, Speak Michif

Luck: 4

Vocations: Preacher, Chief

Talents: Coordinate, Moral Outrage, Righteous Anger, Savant (Knowledge (theology and philosophy)), Voice of the People

* Riel's first language was French requiring him to learn Michif and English.

THE MARTIAL DISCIPLE

MARTIAL ARTISTS FOR CONAN THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

JOSHUA COLE

> *Yasmina, watching, did not see by what roguery of movement or illusion the man in the green turban avoided the terrible disembowelling thrust. But the keen blade whickered between side and lifted arm, and to Yasmina it seemed that Khemsa merely brushed his open palm lightly against Conan's bull-neck. But the Cimmerian went down like a slain ox.*
>
> **Robert E. Howard, 'The People of the Black Circle'**

From the Rakshas enslaved to the Black Circle to the unfathomable masters of far Khitai, a handful of Hyborian age warriors eschew armour and weapons in favour of esoteric disciplines. These strange arts, pre-Atlantean or perhaps pre-human, give them strength and speed beyond the limits of ordinary men. Some say they are more akin to sorcery than swordplay; certainly in their mysticism – and, often, their madness – these martial disciples share much with the dread scholars of the dark arts.

Adventures: Who can say what drives a man to dedicate his life to the mastery of body and soul, or what drives such a master to traverse the dark places of the world? Most martial disciples are shackled, either by their strange masters or by their own will, to a monastery or cult. When they wander the world it is generally on the business of their superiors. A few come into possession of ancient secrets by other means, either stumbling across the same inventions that fired the first masters by strange chance or finding manuals from the pre-cataclysmic age. These martial disciples are far more likely to travel and adventure. Martial disciples are an alien breed to the Hyborian races, however, and when they join a band of adventurers it is generally for their own esoteric purposes, little understood by other folk.

Characteristics: Most martial disciples are immediately recognisable while travelling the Hyborian nations or their immediate neighbours, as by far the greatest number hail from the distant east. Martial disciples not enslaved to some dread order are generally self-sufficient and self-contained, speaking little and sagely. They are more likely to be mistaken for scholars than any other warrior class. The martial disciple's most formidable skills revolve around unarmed combat, and so most travel lightly armed, if armed at all.

Religion: Martial disciples often follow the strange gods of distant climes, often dedicating themselves to a particular idol or effigy that represents an aspect of their fighting style. Some literally worship the terrible masters of their order as some of those masters seem more akin to gods than mortals. Other martial disciples scorn the gods entirely; like corrupt and decadent sorcerers, they prize their own arts above all else, natural or supernatural. A few, often multiclass scholar-disciples, seek to further

their mental and martial prowess by trucking with black things from the outer dark. These last are often the deadliest martial disciples of all; they are certainly the most terrible.

Background: Depending on the method by which they acquired their arts, martial disciples may hail from almost any background. Khitans comprise the majority of martial disciples, for many temples in that land preserve some dim memory of ancient styles. The black seers of Yimsha, in the Himelians, also trained their apprentices in strange martial arts. Elsewhere in the world, lost manuals of body and mind await only an intrepid or foolish adventurer to

THE MARTIAL DISCIPLE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Base Dodge Bonus	Base Parry Bonus	Magic Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	+2	Improved Unarmed Strike
2	+1	+1	+1	+1	+0	+3	+3	Martial Discipline
3	+2	+2	+2	+1	+1	+3	+3	Acrobatics +5, Disciplined Defence
4	+3	+3	+3	+2	+1	+4	+4	Uncanny Dodge
5	+3	+3	+3	+2	+1	+4	+4	Mobility
6	+4	+4	+4	+3	+2	+5	+5	–
7	+5	+5	+5	+3	+2	+5	+5	Improved Martial Discipline
8	+6/+1	+6	+6	+4	+2	+6	+6	Improved Uncanny Dodge
9	+6/+1	+6	+6	+4	+3	+6	+6	Acrobatics +10, Disciplined Blow
10	+7/+2	+7	+7	+5	+3	+7	+7	Improved Mobility, Damage Reduction 1/-
11	+8/+3	+8	+8	+5	+3	+7	+7	Speed of the Hare
12	+9/+4	+9	+9	+6	+4	+8	+8	–
13	+9/+4	+9	+9	+6	+4	+8	+8	Damage Reduction 2/-
14	+10/+5	+10	+10	+7	+4	+9	+9	Greater Martial Discipline
15	+11/+6/+1	+11	+11	+7	+5	+9	+9	Greater Mobility, Acrobatics +15
16	+12/+7/+2	+12	+12	+8	+5	+10	+10	Damage Reduction 3/-
17	+12/+7/+2	+12	+12	+8	+5	+10	+10	Speed of the Wind
18	+13/+8/+3	+13	+13	+9	+6	+11	+11	–
19	+14/+9/+4	+14	+14	+9	+6	+11	+11	Damage Reduction 4/-
20	+15/+10/+5	+15	+15	+10	+6	+12	+12	Master Martial Discipline

return their secrets to the world of the living in the form of new varieties of martial disciple. All martial disciples display a level of detachment and discipline rare outside of sorcerous circles, if, indeed, they are themselves outside those circles.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Abilities: The martial disciple needs a high Wisdom to get best use from many of his class features, particularly if he pursues one of the more mystical martial disciplines. A high Dexterity helps him survive unarmoured in a world of mailed warriors, and also to finesse an unarmed strike through kinks in that mail. Strength increases the damage dealt by a martial disciple, Constitution his own ability to survive. Finally, many martial disciple class skills are based off of Intelligence.

Hit Dice: d8 (average)

CLASS SKILLS

The martial disciple's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (alchemy) (Int), Craft (herbalism) (Int), Craft (any mundane) (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex) and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x4

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the martial disciple.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A martial disciple is proficient with all simple weapons. Note that armour check penalties for wearing medium or heavy armour apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight-of-Hand and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a –1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armour and equipment carried.

Improved Unarmed Strike: At 1st level, the martial disciple gains Improved Unarmed Strike as a bonus feat.

Martial Disciple: Upon attaining his 2nd level in this class, the disciple chooses one (and only one) martial discipline to which he dedicates his training. He cannot later change his discipline, nor can he acquire another. Many characters, particularly those who do not begin their adventuring careers as disciples, have little choice in the discipline they practice – they must accept whatever teachings esoteric writings or venerable teachers deign to grant them.

At the games master's option, other martial disciplines may be available in addition to, or in place of, those listed below.

Fell Hand Discipline – Strike the Soul (Su): The disciple may add his magic attack bonus to his unarmed attacks in place of his base attack bonus. If he does so, his opponent must use his own magic attack bonus for defence, rather than his parry or dodge defence.

While using this technique with a full-attack action, the disciple may make as many iterative attacks as his base attack bonus would allow, at the usual penalties.

Flesh of Mountains Discipline – Surmount the Dagger (Ex): While unarmoured, the disciple gains damage reduction 2/-. This is identical to the damage reduction provided by armour, and stacks with that provided by this class or the barbarian class.

Iron-Banded Discipline – Snapping Mongoose Strike (Ex): The disciple can initiate a grapple attempt whenever he deals damage with an unarmed strike. If the disciple does not possess the Improved Grapple feat, he still provokes an attack of opportunity normally.

Mighty Blows Discipline – Dread Blow (Ex): The disciple may sacrifice any additional

attacks he may be entitled to in order to make a single, deadly unarmed strike, as a full-round action. Should it hit, this blow is automatically treated as a critical threat.

Thousand Blows Discipline – Second Hand (Ex): The disciple gains Two-Weapon Combat Proficiency as a bonus feat, even if he does not meet the prerequisites.

While fighting unarmed, the disciple is treated as fighting with two weapons.

Acrobatics: By 3rd level, the martial disciple learns to push his body in ways ordinary men would consider impossible. He gains a +5 bonus to jump, tumble and balance checks. This is an extraordinary ability.

At 9th level, this bonus increases to +10.

At 15th level, this bonus increases to +15.

Disciplined Defence: At 3rd level, the disciple learns how to turn his preternatural awareness of self and surroundings into defence. While unarmoured or wearing light armour, he gains a bonus to Defence equal to his Wisdom modifier (if positive). This is an extraordinary ability.

Mobility: From 5th level onwards, the martial disciple gets a +4 bonus to Dodge Defence against attacks of opportunity caused when he moves out of or within a threatened area. If the disciple already has Mobility from some other source, such as being a 5th level nomad already, he instead gains Improved Mobility (see below). Note that Mobility does not apply if the disciple is mounted. This is an extraordinary ability.

Improved Martial Discipline: At 7th level, the disciple masters a more advanced technique associated with his martial discipline. He must select this technique from the same tree as his first martial discipline.

Fell Hand Discipline – Blows Undreamt (Su): The disciple adds his magic attack bonus to the armour piercing rating of his unarmed strikes.

Flesh of Mountains Discipline – Scorn the Blade (Ex): While unarmoured, the disciple gains damage reduction 4/-, superseding that provided by the Surmount the Dagger discipline. This is identical to the damage reduction provided by armour, and stacks with that provided by this class or the barbarian class.

Iron-Banded Discipline – One Hundred Hands (Ex): The disciple is treated as a Large creature for purposes of grappling. He gains a +4 bonus on grapple checks and may become immune to the improved grab ability of certain creatures.

Mighty Blows Discipline – Stunning Blow (Ex): Any critical hit the disciple lands with an unarmed strike automatically stuns his target for 1d4-1 rounds. The target gets a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ the disciple's class level + the disciple's Wisdom modifier) to resist this effect.

Thousand Blows Discipline – Forest of Fists (Ex): When multiple enemies attack the disciple, they do not gain the usual cumulative bonuses to their attacks. The disciple can still be flanked, however.

Disciplined Blow: At 9th level, the disciple learns how to better focus the energy of his body and mind. He adds his Wisdom modifier (if positive) to attack rolls in addition to either his Strength or Dexterity modifier.

Damage Reduction: Starting at 10th level, the martial disciple gains the extraordinary ability to shrug off some amount of injury from each blow or attack. Subtract 1 from the damage the disciple takes each time he is dealt damage. At 13th level, this damage reduction rises to 2. At 16th, it rises to 3. At 19th, it rises to 4. Damage reduction can reduce damage to 0 but not below 0.

Improved Mobility: From 10th level onwards, the disciple never provokes attacks of opportunity, whatever he does, so long as he moves at least 10 feet during the combat round. If the disciple somehow already has Improved Mobility, such as for already having had Mobility from another source before reaching 5th level and so gaining Improved Mobility at 5th level instead of Mobility, then he instead gains Greater Mobility (see below). Note that Improved Mobility does not apply if the disciple is mounted. This is an extraordinary ability.

Speed of the Hare: An 11th-level disciple moves at speed ordinary men struggle to match. His base speed increases by 30 feet. This is an extraordinary ability.

Greater Martial Discipline: At 14th level, the disciple nears full mastery of his esoteric art, and can execute a new technique derived from those he already learned. He must select this technique from the same tree as his first martial discipline.

Fell Hand Discipline - Clasp the Mind (Su): When the disciple damages an opponent with an unarmed strike, he also drains 1d6 power points from his target. If the victim has no further power points, or never had any to begin with, he instead suffers one point of temporary Wisdom damage.

Flesh of Mountains Discipline – Defy the Hammer (Ex): While unarmoured, the disciple gains damage reduction 6/-, superseding that provided by the Scorn the Blade discipline. This is identical to the damage reduction provided by armour, and stacks with that provided by this class or the barbarian class.

Iron-Banded Discipline – Cage of Limbs (Ex): The disciple is treated as a Huge creature for purposes of grappling. He gains a +8 bonus on grapple checks and may become immune to the improved grab ability of certain creatures.

Mighty Blows Discipline – Tree-Fell Strike (Su): The disciple strikes with such overwhelming force that his critical hits deal extra damage even to objects or creatures normally immune to such effects, such as plants.

Thousand Blows Disciple – One Thousand As One (Ex): The disciple adds together the damage he dealt his target in that round. Damage reduction is applied to the total damage, rather than the individual blows.

Greater Mobility: From 15th level onwards, the disciple may move up to his speed as part of a full attack action, rather than merely taking a five-foot step. He may move and attack in any order, so he might for example move five feet, attack once, move another five feet, attack twice more and then move again for the remaining 50 feet of his movement. Note that greater mobility does not apply if the disciple is mounted or wearing heavy armour. This is an extraordinary ability.

Speed of the Wind: A 17th level disciple possesses remarkable quickness, and often seems to move faster than the eye can see. His base speed increases by an additional 30 feet. This stacks with the Speed Of The Hare class feature. This is an extraordinary ability.

Master Martial Discipline: Upon attaining 20th level, the martial disciple reaches the pinnacle of his achievement as he is inducted into the master technique of his chosen discipline, the most terrible secret of his art. Many of these strange and esoteric manoeuvres rely as much upon sorcery as sinew, for the disciple has now achieved a state almost akin to that of a mystical being. The disciple must select this technique from the same tree as his first martial discipline.

Fell Hand Discipline – Blind God's Eye (Su): The disciple can make unarmed strikes at a distance while using his Strike the Soul technique. He effectively adds 15 feet to his reach. He can make attacks of opportunity, grant or benefit from flanking bonuses, trip, disarm, sunder or even grapple any opponent within his expanded reach, just as if he were within a few feet of his target. This is not a ranged attack and does not provoke attacks of opportunity from nearby enemies.

Flesh of Mountains Discipline – Dream the Mountain (Su): The disciple applies his damage reduction even to magical and energy attacks that would otherwise affect him normally.

Iron-Banded Discipline – Iron God's Grasp (Ex): The disciple is treated as a Gargantuan creature for purposes of grappling. He gains a +16 bonus on grapple checks and may become immune to the improved grab ability of certain creatures.

The disciple has the option to conduct a grapple normally or to hold the opponent one-handed. If he chooses to do the latter, he takes a –20 penalty on grapple checks, but is not considered grappled himself.

Mighty Blows Discipline – Dread God's Hammer (Ex): The disciple automatically confirms a critical threat, including one dealt by his Dread Blow class feature.

Furthermore, any creature that fails its save against his Stunning Blow technique is stunned for 1d4-1 minutes.

Thousand Blows Disciple – Storm of Wrath (Ex): The disciple gains Whirlwind Attack as a bonus feat, even if he does not meet the prerequisites.
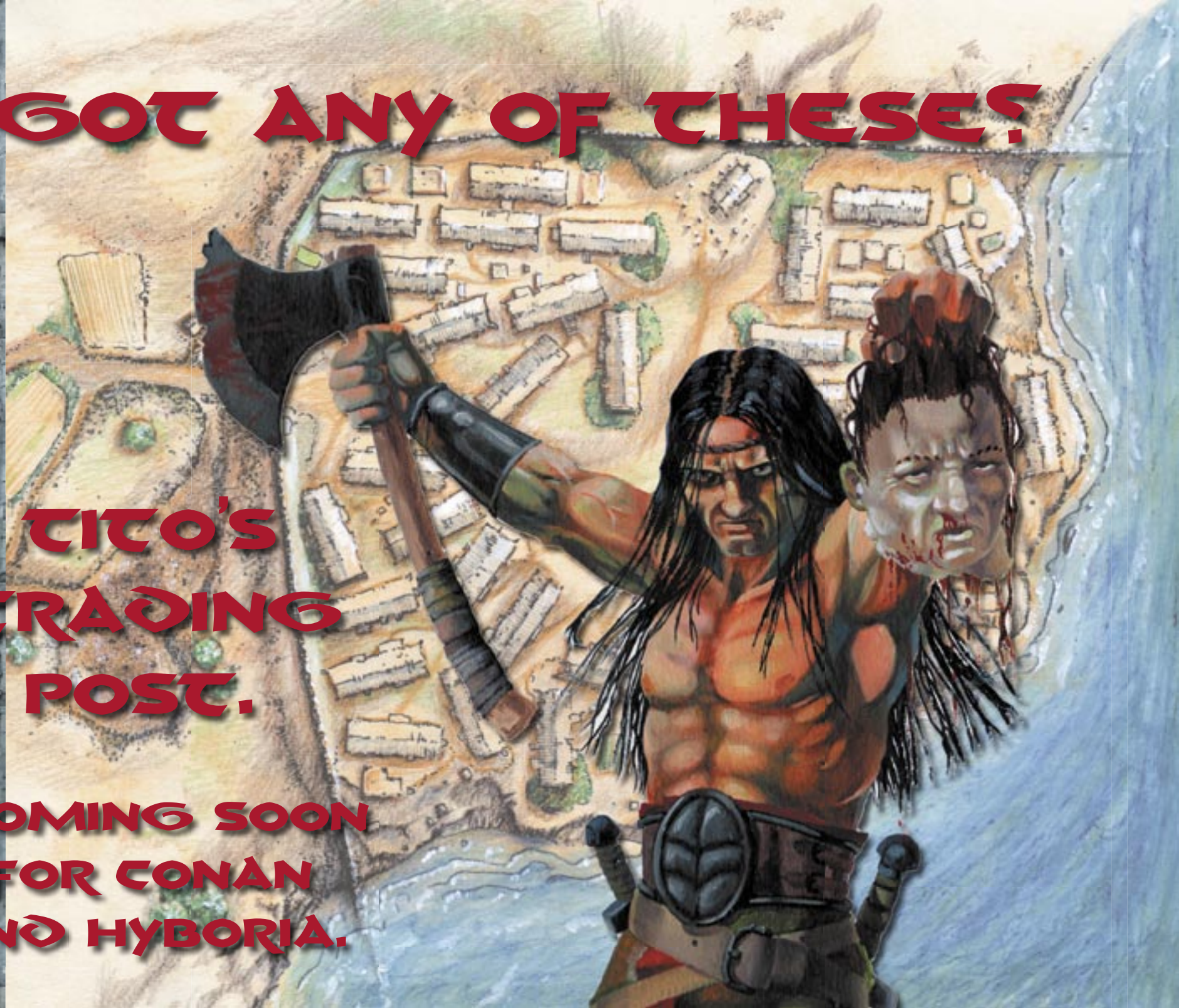
The disciple may make a Whirlwind Attack as an attack, rather than a full-attack action, allowing him to use it as part of his normal attack routine. As such, he can make multiple Whirlwind Attacks in a round, take a move action and use a Whirlwind Attack, or combine a Whirlwind Attack with other attacks.

The Jonny Nexus Experience

Rebooting Your Campaign, Part II

In last issue's article, I described how I began the process of switching my campaign from *Golden Heroes* to *Silver Age Sentinels*, by means of an epic storyline involving the shattering of reality into three separate alternate realities: Surfworld, Wasteworld, and Reichworld.

Now if you haven't yet read last issue's article then I suggest you do so: it's easily available, it's free and, more importantly, this article will make a hell of a lot more sense if you've read the previous one.

+++Taps fingers and waits while everyone catches up+++

Okay...

Last issue ended with the players successfully rescuing Alastrina from the SS HQ set atop Reichworld's St Michael's Mount and making their way to her homeworld of Avalon, thus completing what I'd dubbed 'Shattered Realities I', the purpose of which was to make it to Avalon.

The overall idea of the Shattered Realities story arc was for the PCs to mend the fracture in reality and restore the original world – almost. While it would be almost the same as the universe they'd previously lived in, it would have enough subtle differences that 'game reality' could accommodate the change to a new rules system. If a PC was a little faster than he had previously been, or a little richer, or if he now had powers that warped reality where previously they'd manipulated probabilities, it didn't matter. The storyline would explain that, transforming it from a realism-destroying niggle to the sort of cool story history that comics are littered with.

So when I finished GMing Shattered Realities I, I already knew the overall plot of Shattered Realities II. There was just one problem – I had no particular idea as to how I could have the players mend the fracture in reality. In my Thursday group, we take it in turns to GM, so I knew I had some months to figure out the answer, but as some months stretched to damn near a year, the answer not only failed to come, but a new problem emerged.

I'd gone off Silver Age Sentinels.

Oh sure, it was all nice and shiny, with a modern task resolution system and points-based character creation. But where combats in Golden Heroes had felt like pages from a comic book, full of ebb and flow, tactics and movement, SAS just felt a bit too streamlined and abstract.

And then Green Ronin published Mutants & Masterminds, a D20 superhero game. It too was modern, with an integrated task resolution system and points-based creation, but it's D20 combat engine – action based and stuffed full of feats – felt much more like Golden Heroes.

The way I often explain it to people is this: if you imagine the relationship between 3rd Edition D&D and 1st Edition AD&D, that's pretty much how Mutants & Masterminds feels compared with Golden Heroes. If Games Workshop had even done a 'third edition' Golden Heroes, I figure Mutants & Masterminds is something like what it would have been.

So by now, while I might not have had anything beyond the sketchiest plot outline for Shattered Realities II, I had a long, long list of requirements:

❋ I wanted to run it under Mutants & Masterminds.

❋ At the end of it, there had to be just one reality, which would be nearly identical to the previous reality, but would be run under either the M&M or SAS rules (depending on which one we ended up choosing).

❋ It had to be the PCs that performed the mending of reality.

※ Whatever it was that the PCs had to do to mend reality, it had to be something that needed the help of the Avalonians. (Otherwise, why had they needed to go to Avalon?)

※ It couldn't be something that the Avalonians could do themselves, without the aid of the PCs. (Otherwise, they would have just sorted it out themselves, wouldn't they?)

※ It had to explain what the golden dome was.

※ It needed to be as mind-bending as Shattered Realities I, but in a *different* way. It should again revolve around Redemption (Bog Boy), and his reality altering powers, but in a *different* way, and it should again involve some type of amnesia for some or all of the players, but again, in a *different* way.

About the only thing that I figured I didn't need to explain was what the fracture itself was, and who had done it: that was a mystery that could be left for the future. But knowing that didn't help resolve any of my multiple conundrums.

Shattered Realities I had been the best scenario I'd ever written or run, and I didn't want the sequel to be an anti-climax. One thing I was determined on was that I didn't want to wimp out and just do a rerun of Shattered Realities I, but with three more alternate reality settings. It had to be totally different.

And then inspiration struck.

Ten years ago, I'd run a campaign set on an alternate 1950s Mars, using the DC Heroes rules, and starring Bog Boy, TAFKAC and Bill. (I described this campaign in my Issue 28 article, 'The day I nearly killed a player' – you should probably stop now and read that, if you haven't already). Bog Boy had loved both the campaign and his character – the human Martian mystic Hank Ryan, a.k.a. The Red Sabre – and had often suggested that I re-run the campaign.

My inspiration was in remembering a nugget of information that I'd once read about the creation of DC's Earth II alternate universe. This nugget – which might well be wrong, but that doesn't matter because right or wrong it gave me the idea – was that Earth II was supposedly the comic books of Earth I.

(Actually, as I type this that really doesn't sound at all plausible, but whatever – like I said it doesn't matter which tree I was barking up, only that I'd found something to bark).

(This is pretty close - the Silver Age incarnation of the Flash (Barry Allen, the Flash of Earth I) was a fan of the original Golden Age Flash in Flash Comics, which inspired him to use his newly acquired powers for superheroing rather than, errr, I think his other career choice was a really fast postman - this would appear to be the same Flash Comics from our reality (Earth X in DC terms, I think...) However, the Silver Age Flash eventually discovered a way of crossing the dimensions into Earth II, where the Golden Age Flash (Jay Garrick, Flash of Earth II) existed, where it was revealed that the Golden Age comics writers (al least, those who inhabited Earth I) had been inspired by dreams that were actually reality leakage from Earth II. Or something. Anyway, all this got retconned out of existance in 1986 because the head honchos at DC said things were getting a bit 'too complicated'. - Comics Guy Editor)

I was going to create a new bit of background for my Cornish campaign, which was then when he was a small boy, Jason Tremaine's (Bog Boy) favourite comic book had been an American comic book called The Triumverate, a tale of three human superheroes on an alternate 1950s Mars.

Just to make things clear, I wasn't saying that my Martian campaign had occurred in the same universe as my Cornish campaign – I was saying that the events of my Martian campaign were a *comic book series* in the universe of my Cornish campaign.

Now I'd started Shattered Realities I with one hell of a surprise for the players and I wanted to do the same with Shattered Realities II. So I didn't mention anything about the Martian campaign to the guys; I just got them to create third versions of their characters, this time using the Mutants & Masterminds rules.

And then play began...

We picked off where we had left them, upon their arrival in Avalon at the stone circle (this version of the universe was still using the Golden Heroes rules, since it was outside the dome that contained the fracture in reality).

Alastrina took them to her world's capital, where they were granted an audience before a council of elders who were what passed for a combined government and judiciary on Avalon.

The elders explained that they had detected the fracture in reality and had imposed the dome upon it – because if they had not, the entire multiverse would have fractured into multiple realities as Cornwall beneath the dome had. They further explained that they did not have the power to heal the fracture, but that they believed that Redemption (a.k.a. Jason Tremaine, Bog Boy's character) could do so, using his reality manipulation powers.

In order for him to do this, the Avalonian elders would perform a magic ritual that would transport the three heroes into the reality fracture itself. They would be outside of reality itself, but the elders believed that Redemption's powers would both enable the heroes to survive outside of reality, but would also give them a means to heal the fracture.
The heroes agreed, and returned to the stone circle, where a ritual transported them... somewhere.

I described that they now found themselves standing in a rust-red landscape beneath a pink-tinged sky. Beside them was a slow moving canal, in which stood three reflections staring back at them – three reflections who were not them.

Staring back at Cousin Jack (Bubba) was a figure who was half man, half alien spider.

Staring back at the Huntsman (Mark) was a figure clad in blue power armour.

And staring back at Redemption (Bog Boy) was a human figure wearing a red helm and clutching a red sabre.

However, when they looked at each other, they saw themselves.

Ten years of memory fell away as Bog Boy realised a bit of what was going on. (Bubba and Mark, who'd never played in the original Martian campaign, had, of course, no idea what was going on).

I then explained to Bog Boy that he recognised the three figures as the Triumverate, the three heroes who'd starred in his favourite childhood comic book, and that he recognised the figure staring back at him as Red Sabre, who'd been his all-time childhood hero. (In their pockets they then found various IDs in the names of Hank Ryan, Tom Jenson, and Chuck Kowlowski).

Bog Boy: [Tries to explain what's going on to the other guys, but realises that ten years on, he can't actually remember many details of the Mars campaign] I can't remember! Have you got the campaign notes?

Me: [Holds up folder] Yeah, I've got them here.

Bog Boy: Can I look at them?

Me: No. It's been getting twenty years since your character read those comics, so he's probably forgotten most of it. I figure there's a really easy way of simulating that – if you can remember something then so can he, and vice versa.

Bog Boy: That's a bit unfair isn't it?

Me: Not really. Those comics are still in boxes in the attic above Jason's shop. If at *any* point in the last however many it is play sessions we've done you'd said that you were going into the attic to real Jason's childhood comic collection, then I'd let you read all the notes.

Bog Boy: I didn't know he had a comics collection in the attic!

Me: Well you could have asked.

Standing behind them was an executive jet with USAF markings (Bog Boy remembered that Panther – a.k.a. Tom Jenson, a.k.a. Dylan Penhaligan, a.k.a. Mark – was a US Navy pilot). They searched the jet, and found a wooden box containing Red Sabre's red helm and sabre, and a metal case that Bog Boy remembered contains the Panther battlesuit. In the comics, Red Sabre was a master lockpicker, and so now apparently was Jason, as he was able to pick the lock, and take out the suit.

Meanwhile, Bubba was having something of a mental crisis, as he realised that he was now playing the character once played by Bill (a guy who in real-life he dislikes quite intensely).

Bubba: [Over and over again] I'm a twat! I'm playing a complete twat!

It was at this point that I started to think that maybe things weren't going to plan.

Now to avoid a long and possibly boring story, and because I fear this article is in danger of entering 'and then my character did this' territory, I think I'll pause at this point and just give you an overview of the scenario, and how it went.

What had happened was this:

The Avalonians had magically transported the heroes into the reality fracture, in the belief that Redemption would be able to use his reality manipulation powers to somehow allow him and his two companions to survive outside of reality. This he did, by subconsciously creating an entire universe for them to operate within whilst inside the fracture, a universe he based on a comic book he once read.

Now Redemption had the power to heal the fracture, but for him – a human being – to do this, his subconscious again had to create an aspect of reality, a metaphor if you like, that his conscious self could manipulate to perform the healing. His subconscious could have created an easy way for him to do this – a big lever with 'pull me' written on it, for example. But alas, his subconscious (a.k.a. me) didn't feel like making it that easy.

Which was why the three of them found themselves inhabiting other people's bodies (Quantum Leap style) with no idea of who they were, where they were, and why they were there (beside a plane that was parked on an ancient wharf, somewhere in the middle of one of Mars's nowheres).

What they had to do was retrace the steps that the Triumverate had taken to get there, which they then proceeded to do, with the aid of a journal they found in the plane. After a few misadventures (such as Dylan bumping into the wife that Jason hadn't bothered to tell him he had, an encounter that involved much use of the word 'honey') they found the intelligence document that had set the Triumverate on their way to the remote wharf.

This document revealed that a local Martian terrorist group, the Legion of Mars, had found and activated an ancient weapon of awesome power. And when the heroes calculated how many days it had been since the weapon had been activated, they found that it was the same number of days they'd experienced since the creation of the reality fracture.
Which they realised meant that this weapon was the 'lever' that Jason's subconscious had created. All they had to do to heal the reality fracture was to find the weapon and deactivate it.

A visit to an ancient site near the wharf revealed the hieroglyphic instructions they needed to operate (or deactivate) the weapon. Further investigation, and a deja vu encounter in a gaming club with the Martian Crown Prince (deja vu,

because such an encounter had been a key moment in the original campaign) led to a combat in the catacombs beneath the Emperor's Palace in which they captured the weapon and deactivated it...

...at which point they found themselves in the stone circle at Avalon, only an instant after – from the point of view of the Avalonians – they'd been transported away.

The reality fracture was mended, and the dome removed, and they were able to travel home to a Cornwall changed back to the Cornwall they knew. Almost. Giles was now richer, with a home that was subtly different (Jason: 'Didn't the kitchen used to be on the left?'); Jason now had odd-coloured eyes; and Dylan had stag-like legs and horns.

To Giles and Dylan this was not only normal, it was the way things had always been. But Jason knew different, knew what had been previously, knew that nothing now was *quite* real.

Conclusions

That's pretty much the end of the story, but I think it would be dishonest of me to not discuss how well the scenarios worked in achieving what I wanted.

Shattered Realities I worked very well. The players loved it, and whilst the SAS combat was somewhat rough and ready it flowed fairly smoothly, helped by the fact that in those realities, the characters had very few superpowers.

Shattered Realities II worked less well. While I loved the storyline, it was much less of a hit with the players, especially Mark and Bubba who'd never played the original campaign, and thus had much less of a connection with it. We also experienced problems due to our inexperience with M&M, including a huge cock-up by me in the supposedly epic final combat that was rendered farcical by my forgetting about the main villain (the Red Sabre's nemesis, Dark Messiah) with the result that he basically stood like a motionless Muppet for three rounds.

But overall, I'd call it a success. Not only was it a hell of a storyline in its own right, but it allowed us to check out two alternative rules systems in play and then switch to one of them (we opted for Mutants & Masterminds in the end), whilst still preserving the internal reality of the game.

So my advice to any GMs wanting to give their campaign a twist is this: if you're in any kind of epic genre (superhero or high fantasy being the obvious examples) where you can have some kind of reality reshaping, then a huge change in systems is possible – and you can have a lot of fun in the process.

MURDER ON THE MEGAWAYS

A SCENARIO FOR THE JUDGE DREDD ROLEPLAYING GAME

MATT SHARP

INTRODUCTION

Murder on the Megaways is a scenario for four to six 6th - 7th level Judges. The story is intended to be an example of an incidental case that a team will be assigned to investigate – a 'typical' crime that all Judges are expected to deal with as part of their everyday lives. The story begins while the Judges are travelling on a megaway – one of the vast, 20-lane motorways that serve as the arteries of the Mega-City. This could be part of their regular Lawmaster patrol route, they could be on their way to another scenario altogether or they could even be in the middle of another adventure – Judges are, after all, expected to investigate crime wherever they find it, and are more than capable of doing several things at once!

The scenario is split into three Progs – Prog One sets the scene and details the setting of the investigation, Prog Two includes details of the various crimes and criminals that can be found in the story, before some villains arrive to shoot the place up in Prog Three. It is intended that the scenario should be 'modular' so that it can be easily 'broken up' into several incidents that can be inserted into your own campaign instead of run as a single adventure. The Big Mo description has been separated out so that an enterprising Games Master can use it as a setting for a different story altogether, for example, and there is no reason why the various investigations detailed in Prog Two are required to take place aboard the service station. All that is required is a little effort and ingenuity to move the details of the murder to a different setting, such as a City Block.

PROG ONE – A LITTLE TROUBLE FOR BIG MO

Read the following italic text aloud to the players:

You cruise north along the massive slab of the great megaway that cuts through the heart of the Sector. You enjoy the feel of the wind on your face as your Lawmaster races along at 200 miles an hour and you feel fortunate that as Judges you have your own lane that allows you to avoid the gridlocks that occasionally develop. The pressure cooker atmosphere of the City always seems to intensify once a citizen gets behind the wheel of a vehicle – incidents of Future Shock Syndrome are 25% higher than anywhere else, even the most mild mannered blocker can succumb to the so-called 'Megaway Madness' or 'White Line Fever'. Fortunately, today seems to be relatively quiet – you suspect that most drivers immediately switch over to computer control as soon as they spot your

MOBILE SERVICE STATION, ROADLINERS INC 'BIG MO'

A big mo performs the same function as a regular service station, but does away with the tedious business of actually having to stop and interrupt a journey. A citizen merely has to punch in a pick-up request when he spots one of these mammoth vehicles to be brought aboard by one of the huge robotic grabbers, allowing him to enjoy a meal or make an essential call of nature while their pod is refuelled and maintained (anything from minor dent repair to a full engine change is possible in the built-in garages) – all at 200 miles an hour. Up to half a mile long, at least three decks high and occupying a minimum of four traffic lanes, a Big Mo is probably the largest civilian ground vehicle to be found in Mega-City One. Mobile service stations are usually staffed by dozens of general purpose and servo-droids under the direction of a human manager.

Size: Colossal; **Defence Value:** 2; **Damage Reduction:** 15; **Structural Hit Points:** 100 per level; **Speed:** 250 (wheeled); **Weapons:** None; **Crew:** 58; **Passengers:** 2,500; **Cargo:** 20,000 tons.

Note that the Big Mo is actually the size of a building, so will follow the rules for destroying buildings as detailed in *The Rookie's Guide to the Block Wars* instead of the normal rules for destroying vehicles. A Big Mo's hit points are therefore structural hit points.
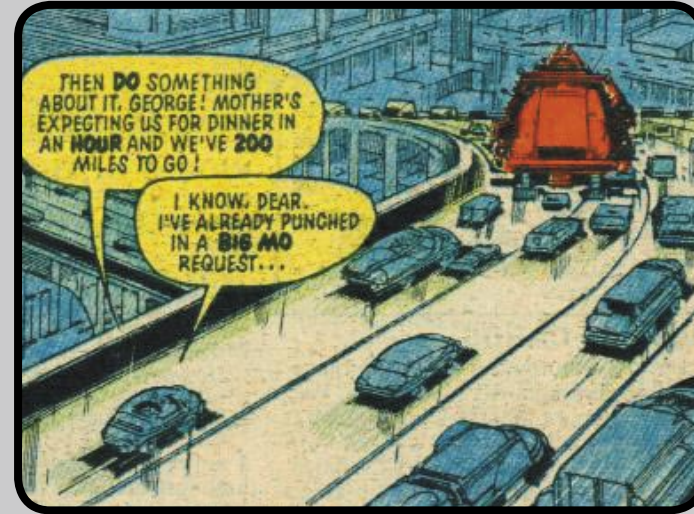
Lawmasters. You've only had to bring in two lawbreakers, both on 15/2 violations, and you spotted a batglider involved in a 14/2 – although he had a lethal encounter with the windshield of a jugger before you could apprehend him. You radioed the robot driver and ordered it to make a statement at the nearest Sector House when it reached its destination and the mess had been scraped off.

A tangle of junctions is just ahead; roadways turn off the main route to arch above and below the slab in an intricate, web- like pattern. You know that trouble is far more likely at a junction, but everything seems to be proceeding relatively smoothly – even if the blare of horns intensifies tenfold. You are almost resigned to an uneventful journey, when you receive a message from Control:

+item+
++STATUS++RED++
INCIDENT REPORTED – BODY FOUND
Caretaker robot 'Call-Me-Larry!' reports the discovery of a corpse in the public conveniences aboard Mobile Service Station 'Majestic Titanic', currently cruising pattern #24657b, grid 47 of Benny Mussolini megaway, just passing webjunction 43565, Tom Corbett Block turn off. *Instruction:* Nearest available unit – investigate!

It seems that you are the nearest available unit – you can catch a glimpse of the towering heights of Tom Corbett Block below you as you pass the junction, which your bike computer confirms is designated as webjunction 43565. Ahead in the distance, you can easily see the gargantuan bulk of a Mobile Service Station – more commonly referred to as a 'Big Mo'.

At a mere four decks, the Majestic Titanic is only a small Big Mo. It is owned and operated by the Black Sun Line - a small independent franchise rather than one of the major megacorps. Once highly fashionable and spectacular, at twelve years old the service station is ancient by the standards of a Mega-City vehicle and appears to be rather quaint and old fashioned, not to mention a little battered. It also seems to have been designed by someone with no taste whatsoever, incorporating a contrasting collection of radically different styles in both its internal and external decoration. The exterior resembles a combination of a classical Greek temple, the Chrysler Building turned on its side and a 1970's multi-storey car park, balanced on top of a giant 19th century locomotive with 30 huge wheels. The interior decorations are even more chaotic.

CONTACTING MAC

If any of the Judges contact MAC and ask for information about the Majestic Titanic, they will be given the following information:

🛡 Detailed history and maintenance logs dating back to the vehicle's construction twelve years ago.

🛡 Justice Department Citizen File on the current manager of the Majestic Titanic, Googly Vinegar-Strokes (see the section entitled **Manager Googly Vinegar-Strokes** in Prog Two).

🛡 A detailed audit record from an Acc/Div credit squad. This was performed six months ago, as part of an investigation into various citizens' complaints that fuel, food and items purchased from the shopping mall were considerably more expensive than elsewhere. Accountant Judge Broughton concluded that this was indeed the case, but the financial records were in order and nothing illegal was occurring.

🛡 A report on the death of citizen Murde MacMillan, who had apparently fallen to his death from the landing pad four weeks ago. The investigating Judge, O'Hara, concluded that MacMillan had been deliberately pushed or thrown onto the Megaway, but had been unable to identify the culprit. Safety nets and a ten-foot high fence were installed around the landing pad on O'Hara's order.

🛡 An official complaint from Googly Vinegar-Strokes, insisting that the ten-foot tall fence makes it impossible for an aircraft to land safely.

🛡 Sundry complains from citizens about the ten-foot tall fence causing damage to their vehicles.

🛡 A report from the previous Graveyard Shift from Judge Hardacre, investigating reports of vandalism. Hardacre concluded that a biker gang known as the Rude Hog Raiders was responsible and put out an APB.

🛡 Further details are available on request. The majority of these are traffic accident records (the huge vehicle is often crashed into or sideswiped), but there are also reports on solved crimes (outbreaks of Future Shock Syndrome are common), as well as financial records.

The Judges have two options to get aboard the Big Mo. The simplest method is to punch in a request to be lifted aboard by one of the gigantic grabbers. This is accomplished after a couple of minutes; however, the vast mechanical arms are not designed to carry bikers so the experience is rather hair-raising! The second method is to drive aboard via the entrance ramp at the rear. This manoeuvre requires a simple Ride check (DC 5). Both methods of entry deposit the Judges in **Location One: The Car Parking Bay.**

The Judges have the authority to order a lockdown – which essentially commands vehicle security to prevent anyone from entering or leaving the scene of a crime. The chief caretaker robot has automatically instigated this protocol, preventing any of the citizens present from leaving. He will ask if the Judges wish to maintain it as soon as he meets them (see the section entitled **Examining the Body** in Prog Two).

FIRST LEVEL

ACCESS CLUSTER

Located at the rear of every public level is an Access Cluster, consisting of a pair of elevators and an anti-grav chute. There is also a flight of emergency stairs, although the fire door that conceals it is kept locked unless there is an emergency. The lock requires a Technical check (DC 20) to open, although a Justice Department override card can unlock it automatically. The doors can also be unlocked from the Security Control room (**Location Twelve**). There is also a network of much smaller service elevators that links every room, although the system is only designed to accommodate a robot the size of a Little Mo. In the event of a hygiene emergency, cleaning robots can be dispatched to the site at a moment's notice. There is also a staff/freight elevator that links every level. Apart from the emergency stairs, this is the only method of reaching level four. The freight elevator will only open for a staff robot, although a Judge's override card will override the locking mechanism.
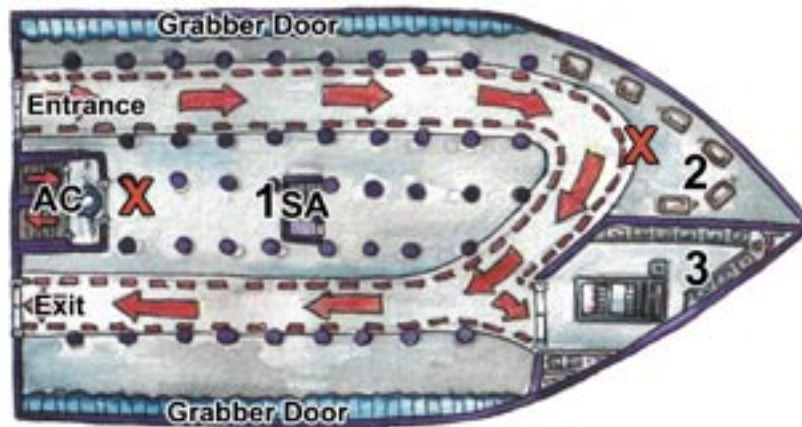
Level 1: Vehicle Parking and Maintenance

Level 2: Restaurant

The Big Mo: Key

Level 1

1. Car Parking Bay
2. Refuelling Terminal
3. Repair Bay

X Security Scanner

SA Staff Access

AC Access Cluster

Level 2

4. Restaurant
5. Kitchens
6. Public Convienences
7. Control Cab

X Security Scanner

SA Staff Access

AC Access Cluster

Level 3: The Shopping Mall

The Big Mo: Key

Level 3

8. The Shopping Mall

9. Public Convienences

X Security Scanner

AC Access Cluster

SA Staff Access

✳ Dead Body
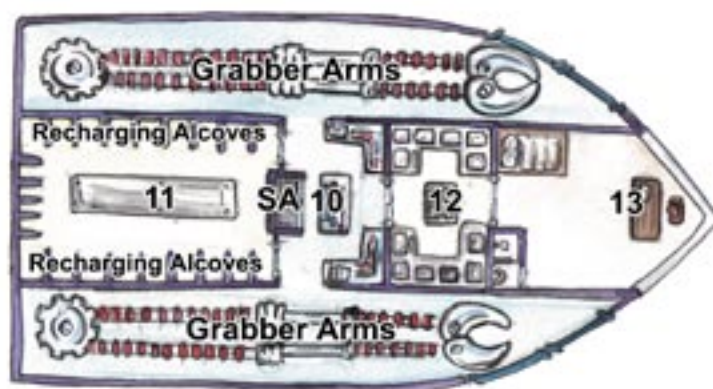
Level 4: Grabber Control and Grabber Bays

Level 4

10. Grabber Control and Grabber Bays

11. Staff Robot Maintenence Workshop and Recharging Bay

12. Security Control

13. Managers Quarters

SA Staff Access

Level 5: The Roof

Level 5

14. Aircraft Landing Pad/ Hanger

14 a. Aircraft Landing Pad

14 b. Hanger

AC Access Cluster

SA Staff Access

ⲟⲟⲟⲟⲟ Chain Link Fence

LOCATION ONE: CAR PARKING BAY

The car park is a vast chamber subdivided into parking bays of various sizes, capable of accommodating anything from a street bike to a one-room mo pad. Pillars, moulded to resemble carved Ionic columns, serve as divisions between parking spaces and apparently support the vaulted, Gothic ceiling. The walls are decorated with bass-relief Art Deco panels showing stylised scenes from the history of Mega-City One. There are three main entrances – a two-lane spiral ramp at the rear leads directly onto the megaway and two huge sliding panels on either side allow the giant robotic grabbers (see **Location Ten**) to deposit their loads into the car park. The large lighting panels are too far apart to provide a decent level of illumination and much of the chamber is shrouded in twilight. Drive-through roadways lead to the Refuelling Terminal (**Location Two**) and the Workshops/Repair Bay (**Location Three**). An access cluster, consisting of a pair of elevators and an anti-grav chute, leads up to the Restaurant (**Location Four**) on Level Two, the Shopping Mall (**Location Eight**) on Level Three and the Hangar (**Location Fourteen**) on the roof area. There is a pair of security scanners mounted in strategic positions on the ceiling – one is fixed to cover the main entrance ramp, the other scans the area around the access cluster. The scanners feed their information to the Security Control (**Location Twelve**) – the coverage is by no means total and there are dozens of blind spots.

However, there are signs of recent vandalism. One wall is covered by a vast scrawl (any Judge who passes a Streetwise check at DC 12 will recognise it as a tag of the Rude Hog Raiders, a local biker gang) and the scanner covering the main ramp has been smashed by some blunt instrument. Other minor damage is evident on much of the decoration – repairs seem to have been started, small cleaning robots (see 'Little Mo' box out, below) are intently scrubbing at the scrawl. A general purpose robot has been dispatched to meet the Judges and is waiting near to the access cluster. It has been ordered to escort them to the public conveniences adjacent to the Shopping Mall on Level Three. If questioned about the damage, it will inform them of the vandalism in the car park, the level two public conveniences and the restaurant. It knows the culprits were eight humans who arrived on two-wheeled vehicles at approximately 0430 hours, but cannot provide any description, as it is not programmed to differentiate between humans.

The car park has spaces for 200 vehicles, 144 bays are occupied. However, only seventeen belong to customers and have a legitimate reason for being parked where they are. The Big Mo is part of a massive smuggling operation; ground cars stolen from all over the Sector are being re-sprayed and transferred onto the streets of the adjacent Sector. This is a recent development, forced on the manager by a sudden dramatic drop in custom and a rise in accident claims (for further information, see the sections entitled **The Smuggling Operation** and **Manager Googly Vinegar-Strokes**, in Prog Two.) Any Judge who investigates the cars will realise that a large proportion of them seem to have been recently re-sprayed and a check on registration numbers will reveal that many have been reported stolen and others are not on record at all.

CLEANING ROBOT, MODERNA ROBOTS LITTLE MO

One of the most common robots to be found in Mega-City One, Moderna Robots 'Little Mo' model is a small and unsophisticated machine charged with the never-ending and thankless task of attempting to keep the corridors of the City Blocks clean and tidy. Standing approximately two feet tall, a Little Mo is little more than a wheeled box with a wide selection of brushes, mops, hoses and cleaning apparatus mounted on retractable arms, designed to reach every possible nook and cranny where dirt can gather. Almost every building in the future city has a small army of these robots on 24-hour alert, patrolling the corridors and pedways, seeking dirt or mess to tidy up. However, Little Mos are also the most common victims of robot smashers – gang members irate that their territorial tags are removed, or the unemployed, determined to prove that they are capable of performing the robots' task just as well as the machines. Unfortunately, no citizen is capable of operating for 24-hours like a robot – in fact, such a 'job thief' lasts approximately three minutes before becoming bored and wandering off to find something else to do. The Little Mo model is not capable of speech, although it will make WHOOP-WHOOP noises if it is in danger or wants someone to get out of its way.

Small Robot
Hit Dice: 1d12 (6 hp)
Initiative: +1 (+1 Dex)
Speed: 20 ft. (Wheeled)
DV: 11
Damage Reduction: 4
Attacks: Slam +0 melee
Damage: Slam 1d3-1/0
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 20 ft./20 ft.
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 12
Software Capacity: 16
Software Packages: Profession (cleaner) +6, Technical +4

Cost: 5,000 cr.
Black Market Cost: -

LOCATION TWO: REFUELLING TERMINAL

This drive through station occupies the front right hand corner of the lower level of the Big Mo. Six fuel pumps, holding fuel ranging in quality from 'Econosave' to 'Premoexpensive', are attended by two servo-droids (see page 105 of *The Judge Dredd Roleplaying Game*), charged with the task of refilling fuel tanks of any vehicle that passes through their gates. There is also a pair of Little Mo cleaning robots (see box out) in constant attendance, wiping windscreens and clearing the worst of the dirt from the cars.

The fuel pumps have a Damage Resistance 10 and 30 hit points. Destroying one will cause it to explode with a 20 foot burst area, causing one hit at 2d6/10 (a successful Reflex save will half damage, any character that fails the save is automatically set alight, suffering a further 1d6 damage for the next 1d6 rounds); automatically starting a Large sized fire.

LOCATION THREE: WORKSHOPS/REPAIR BAY

The front left of the Big Mo consists of a large and well-equipped workshop capable of performing almost any repair to a vehicle. Six general purpose robots (see page 104 of *The Judge Dredd Roleplaying Game*), with Technical +10 software and the equivalent of an advanced electrical, electronic and mechanical toolkit, perform any and all work they are requested to the best of their abilities. The workshop is

capable of performing any task from a routine service to an engine replacement and body remould. The large shuttered door is locked; but can be opened by depositing a cred card into the slot: 25 creds will open the door, although a Judge's override card also works.

The robots are currently re-spraying and replacing the number plates of the stolen vehicles. However, they have been specifically programmed not to register what they are actually doing – any Judge questioning them will receive nothing but confused responses. The robots will continue with what they are doing, but will claim that they have had nothing but a puncture repair and a windscreen replacement in the last 24-hour period.

SECOND LEVEL

LOCATION FOUR: RESTAURANT

The restaurant occupies the rear half of the second level. A large panoramic window offers a spectacular view of the road behind the massive vehicle, but the room is decorated in the same clashing combination of styles as the other public areas. To the left and right, doors exits to the public conveniences – MEN on the left, WOMEN is to the right. A large counter occupies the centre of the room, attended by a dozen ultra-friendly servo-droids. The robots are intent on offering the Big Mo's basic (but expensive) menu to anyone that passes. Surrounding the counter are thirty rather functional plasti-metal tables, including uncomfortable built-in chairs. Each table can comfortably seat two people, although they are designed to accommodate six. A door to the kitchens, marked 'Staff Only', is at the front of the room. Security scanners are mounted in the ceiling to cover the access cluster and the counter area. However, both have been smashed although a general purpose robot is in the process of repairing them.

There are other signs of recent vandalism. One of the servo-droids has been decapitated, but is still offering mock-munce chunks with extra cheez to anyone that passes within 10 feet. Another Rude Hog Raider tag covers the window, with another pair of Little Mo's in the process of removing it. Several tabletops have obviously just been scrubbed clean and some have been attacked with what appears to be an axe and some sort of laser cutting tool.

The room is occupied by eighteen citizens. There is a family of six crammed into a corner, intent on eating their meal of 90-ounce mock-meat munce burgers and a young man and his 90-year old girlfriend are necking at another table. Four smart suited sales reps seem to be holding an impromptu business meeting near to the counter, their extravagant arm gestures confusing the servo-droids. They pause only to leer at the three members of the senior branch of the Plastic Pams, a fashion conscious femi-gang from Pamela Anderson Block on their way to the 32nd Annual Inter-Sector Pro-Celebrity Posing League. A shabby vagrant is sleeping hunched over one of the other tables, unmovable despite the Little Mo's best efforts, apparently uncomfortably close to a middle aged couple who eye him suspiciously. All those present follow the usual Mega-City protocol of studiously ignoring everyone else in case it starts trouble, although all glance at the Judges as they arrive.

CITIZENS
Citizen 2; HD 2d6 (8 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; DV 10; Attack +0 melee, +0 ranged; Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 8.
Prior Life: None
Skills & Feats: Bluff +3, Computer Use +3, Craze (any) +4, Drive +4, Hide +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Search +1, Spot +3, Streetwise +1, Technical +1; Alertness, Skill Focus (craze).
Tactics: The citizens are not looking for trouble and will do their best to assist the Judges if questioned, although none of them know anything relevant. The citizens will not fight if they can help it; in the event of a battle, they will run, hide or panic (or, more likely, all three).

LOCATION FIVE: KITCHENS

The large and well-equipped kitchen is attended by half a dozen servo-droids who labour unceasingly to create the gastronomic delights available on the menu. One of the servo-droids (Call-Me-Chef) has been designated as the master with the others slaved to his systems, allowing it to co-ordinate kitchen operations. A Little Mo is in constant attendance, intended to keep the kitchens free of dirt, grease and grime in case of a sudden health and safety inspection, but Call-Me-Chef runs a tyrannical operation and the smaller robot is too intimidated to do anything other than very basic cleaning. Call-Me-Chef will be greatly offended if any humans enter the sanctuary of his kitchen. It speaks a combination of Megaspeak and machine code – any communication that it makes is interspaced with loud bleeps. Doors lead forward into

the Control Cab (**Location Seven**) and the Restaurant (**Location Four**) at the rear.

SOUNDBITE – CALL-ME-CHEF

'Get out of my –BLEEP– kitchen, –BLEEP– humans! –BLEEP– trying to –BLEEP– cook in here!'

LOCATION SIX: PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The second level public conveniences are on either side of the restaurant, accessed by a short, zigzag corridor. The male toilets, to the left, consists of a pair of lavatory cubicles and half a dozen urinals, the female toilets, on the opposite side, consists of eight cubicles. Both rooms are decorated in a faux-ancient Grecian style and each has a servo-droid in attendance.

The male conveniences have been severely vandalised, the urinals have all smashed with a large blunt object and slashed with a laser cutter. A general purpose robot guards the door, explaining the problem and directing anyone to the alternative Public Conveniences on Level Three.

LOCATION SEVEN: CONTROL CAB

A tiny, cramped cabin at the very pinnacle of the Big Mo, the control cab is a plexi-glass cockpit at the front of the vehicle. The cabin is occupied by a general purpose robot (with Drive +10) that is wired directly intro the control systems. The Big Mo does not have a manual operation mechanism. There is also an Autodrive system (Drive +3) that kicks in automatically if the robot is disabled or destroyed.

THIRD LEVEL

LOCATION EIGHT: SHOPPING MALL

The shopping mall consists of eight shops linked by a mezzanine. Six occupy the lower level, with a flight of spiral stairs and a plastiglass elevator at the foremost section leading to the remaining two on the mezzanine level. The shops mainly supply high fashion clothing or craze gear – none are particularly spectacular, but they are all considerably more expensive than a conventional mall. The access cluster is at the rear end of the mall, covered by a security scanner. Several other scanners offer a great degree of coverage and all the shops have their own systems installed. This area is free of the vandalism that is apparent on the lower levels – the Rude Hog Raiders did not reach level three. There are four exits from this area. The public conveniences are reached via a pair of zigzag corridors – MEN on the left, WOMEN to the right.

The mall is occupied by some 50 citizens. There is a minority of normal citizens (see above for stats), families or couples who are intent on window shopping and minding their own business. However, like every other mall in Mega-City One, the Majestic Titanic mall has developed its own juve gang. The Snuffragettes are an all girl gang, mostly in their early teens, who have claimed the Big Mo (the shopping mall in particular) as their territory. They are composed entirely of mo-pad trash, the 22nd century equivalent of trailer trash, and are a collection of scruffy, violent and obnoxious juves, all with shoe fetishes. There are currently seventeen members of the gang present. They are not looking for trouble (certainly not with the Judges) but are currently engaged in 'strutting' their turf – wandering around, eyeballing the visiting citizens and making their presence felt.

THE SNUFFRAGETTES

Citizen 1; HD 1d6 (6 hp); Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd: 30 ft.; DV 11 (+1 Ref); Attack +0 melee, +1 ranged; Fort +0, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 10.

Prior Life: Juve

Skills & Feats: Bluff +1, Craze (varies) +2, Streetwise +4; Luck of Grud, Run and Skill Focus (streetwise).

Tactics: The Snuffragettes are intent on looking good in their territory, so will always attempt to remain cool at all times (or at least, look cool). None of them know anything to do with any crimes aboard the Big Mo (apart from the scrawling and shoplifting that they themselves are guilty of committing) and are not looking for trouble, so will co-operate with the Judges, in a not co-operating sort of a way. They are not expecting or equipped for a rumble, so in the event of a fight they will run and hide.

SOUNDBITE – THE SNUFFRAGETTES

'Dead rhino!'
        -*Something that is good/not good/very sexually attractive depending on the tone of voice used.*

'Pig boys razvedk 'gette turf, tagged and bagged! Rumble voke! Ragnageddon brewin – BOOM!'
        -*Response to questions about the Rude Hog Raiders. A Judge that passes a Streetwise check (DC 10) can translate this as: 'The Rude Hog Raiders have scouted our territory and claimed it as their own. This invasion of our territory will surely lead to conflict in the future.'*

LOCATION NINE: PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The third level toilets are identical in design to the conveniences on the lower floor.

The male toilets has a general purpose robot stationed outside, who will explain that that public conveniences are currently out of service and directs anyone to the alternative conveniences on Level Two (which are also out of commission – the robot staff are not designed with much initiative and have no idea how to cope with mutually exclusive orders). Chief caretaker robot Call-Me-Larry! is waiting in the male toilets for the Judges arrival. The corpse that the Judges have come to examine in huddled in the right hand side cubicle. For more information about the body, see the section entitled **Examining the Body** in Prog Two.

FORTH LEVEL

The forth level is designated as 'Staff Only' and is not accessible by the access cluster. The Judges must either use the emergency stairs or the staff elevator. All the doors are locked, requiring a Technical check (DC 25) to open, although a Justice Department override card will automatically open the doors and override the security.

LOCATION TEN: GRAPPER CONTROL AND GRABBER BAYS

Grabber control is a large, H-shaped room that links the two bays that hold the gigantic mechanical arms that lift vehicles aboard the vehicle. Although fully automated, there are a pair of general purpose robots (with Technical +10 software) in constant attendance in case anything goes wrong. The room consists of

a bewildering array of control consoles and flashing light, although the system is entirely computer controlled without any sort of manual control mechanism. The room does not possess any form of lighting other than the flashing lights on the consoles – robots do not require light to work. The 'Staff Only' stairs and elevator both exit into this room and doors lead forward to Security Control (**Location Twelve**) and back to the Robot Maintenance Workshop (**Location Eleven**).

LOCATION ELEVEN: STAFF ROBOT MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP AND RECHARGING BAY

The workshop and recharging bay occupies the rear of the forth level. It is a large, functional room lined with ten-foot tall recharging alcoves. There are twenty of these recharging alcoves, four of which are occupied by off-duty servo-droids and three general purpose robots. All are joined to their alcoves by a cable that plugs into the back of their head. If any character enters the room, the robots will all turn, simultaneously, to look at the intruder. Their optical sensors will follow the character around until he leaves. A large workbench occupies the centre of the room, covered in various tools and devices. Lying on the bench is the severed head of the damaged servo-droid from the restaurant, which is repeating the phrase 'can I help y-', over and over again. The workshop is usually occupied by Call-Me-Larry!, but he is otherwise engaged helping the Judges. This room is also unlit, although the recharging booths all have a pulsating light that casts a weird flickering glow over the scene.

LOCATION TWELVE: SECURITY CONTROL

A small, cramped room nestled between the two front prongs of the H that forms the Grabber Control Room (**Location Ten**), Security Control is filled with screens and monitors that relay the images taken by the security scanners in all the other areas of the vehicle. A large, bulky computer system monitors all the security measures, but Call-Me-Larry! is in charge of actually scrutinising the screens and co-ordinating everything. There are thirty screens, each displaying the image from a security scanner. The ones connected to broken scanners display nothing but a tuning signal. Doors lead forwards to the manager's quarters and back to grabber control.

If any Judges think to check the security scanner tapes to find any information about the body, they will find that the security system seems to have been deactivated at the time, despite Call-Me-Larry!'s claim that this is not possible. Twenty minutes work and a successful Computer Use check (DC 25) will determine that the security system has been reprogrammed to switch off when it reaches a certain point on its daily route. Call-Me-Larry! has also been reprogrammed, so will not register that there is even a gap in the security monitoring system. For more information, see the section entitled **The Smuggling Operation** in Prog Two.

LOCATION THIRTEEN: MANAGER'S QUARTERS

A large, rather opulent room located at the front of the vehicle. Thick synthi-plush carpets cover the floor and the décor is slightly less tasteless than the rest of the vehicle.

Very slightly. The room is dominated by a massive plexi-glass picture window that offers a spectacular view of the road ahead. The room doubles up as the manager's office and personal living space. The manager's desk is against the window facing towards the door (the view makes Vinegar-Strokes nauseas so he avoids looking at it if possible). The desk is large and ornate, and appears to be an authentic antique made of genuine wood (a character that passes a Knowledge (antiques) check at DC 15 will realise that it is a modern reproduction). There is nothing on top of the desk other than a computer terminal and a communicator. There is also a small on-suite toilet cubicle and a foldout bed is fitted to the wall. The manager himself sits behind his desk, looking nervous and flustered (see the section **Manager Googly Vinegar-Stokes** in Prog Two for more details of the manager.)

FIFTH LEVEL/ROOF
LOCATION FOURTEEN: AIRCRAFT LANDING PAD/HANGER

The roof of the Big Mo is also another vehicle park, designed to accommodate hovercars and other aircraft. The rear half of the area is a roofed hangar that can comfortably hold twenty average sized vehicles. The remainder is an open air landing pad, although there is a seven-foot tall wall surrounding the area that keeps the most of the slipstream at bay. On top of this is a ten-foot tall chain-link fence – it is tough and functional, but apparently rather dented in places. The area is currently empty of vehicles.

+++NEXT PROG+++THRILL POWER INCREASES!+++

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